

**The American Dream in the Selected Works of Classic
American Literature (The Great Gatsby and Death of
a Salesman): An Analysis**

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the partial fulfillment for the award of the

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Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in English

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

One cannot talk about the dream of racial and economic equality without the name of Martin Luther King coming to one's mind and this dream is often associated with the American dream. The phrase American Dream became popular when James Truslow in 1931 defined it. According to him life should be richer and fuller for everyone irrespective of that if someone had been lucky to be born in a house of high birth or position. With the passage of time, the concept of American dream has become more concentrated towards the prosperity of an individual being. American dream can have different forms based on the perspective from which it is viewed, it could be an individual American dream or collective American dream. This thesis will be about exploring how the concept of American dream acts as a theme in various works of literature of the U.S. . This has been done by analyzing it in two famous works of the American literature.

For the purpose of research for this thesis, qualitative methods have been used. The data has been collected by review of literature of two famous texts namely *The Great Gatsby* which is a novel by F Scott Fitzgerald and *Death of a Salesman* which is a play by Arthur Miller.

American dream is a theme which is widely used in American literature. It has often been associated with freedom, equality and happiness of an individual. Its definition has also seen to have different meanings for different individuals. Fitzgerald has written many of his works keeping this concept in mind. Arthur Miller wrote the play *Death of a salesman* in 1948 whose one of the important themes around which the plot is centered is American dream.

F. Scott Fitzgerald has often used class in his novels and American Dream has been his topic of Interest. There are illusions and reality in *The Great Gatsby* and we see an attempt to find the

boundary between them. The novel focuses on the betrayal of the American dream because of the corrupt society that exists. The American dream is something about working hard to achieve success in life and make oneself achieve high position. We see that in this novel, the case is just opposite and it becomes a novel talking about a distorted version of American dream which gives more importance to its material aspects. The protagonist in the novel seems to be involved in the chasing of his selfish pleasures. In this one, the American dream crumbles because it demands much more than hard work.

When we try to trace the theme of American dream in the play *Death of a Salesman*, we find it is a prominent one and can be interpreted with the life and behavior of different characters in the play. Willy's father had an ability to endure hardships and like to explore new places and trying new things for himself. It was this attitude which enabled him to go to Alaska during the time of gold rush. Willy is not able to become like him and achieve success like his father because he belonged to a different time period.

Willy's brother Ben just like their father is independent and self reliant. He followed the footsteps of their father and left his business to wander in the jungles of Africa in search for diamonds. He was successful in his attempts and it became a source of quick wealth for him. Willy idolizes the way Ben got successful and became rich and popular easily. This is the reason he always looks for Ben's advice and approval even after Ben's death. He sees Ben and asks him when about to make a crucial decision.

Chapter I

Introduction

The meaning of the phrase American Dream is the faith of the people of the country that they can be successful in life and work irrespective of which class they belong or the place that they live. Achieving this dream is not something one gets by luck, but through working hard enough even in the face of peril and probably through perseverance. There were many components which made the American Dream possible and gave it a higher chance to be realized than that in other nations. Some of these factors are America's geographical positions and the multiculturalism that inspires innovation. Large area covered by coastline and large number of natural resources in America also contribute to growth of residents as it provides them with food and income opportunities.

American Dream had many connotations throughout history, from freedom to be a part of a religion, following its customs to owning a home for you and your family. It has got both positive (from people who were successful in realizing it) and negative (who couldn't achieve it) emotions, some praising the idea and some considering it just a fallacy. This is because such a large number of people relocated to America leaving their native countries just under the spell of American Dream. Though some were successful, many failed. So American Dream is a dream of success but it all depends on how someone defines success. You have to decide if you are considering the materialistic aspect or the moral values and family welfare.

All people want is that the promises of individual prosperity and protection of rights of every citizen that were made in the constitution, in the declaration of independence should be fulfilled. These official documents also claimed to protect the people against a totalitarian government.

They also talk about liberty, welfare, fortune etc. These claims are what propel people to pursue the American Dream and the way one sees them is different for each individual so as everyone will have different ambitions and the necessary requirements so American Dream is different for each individual. Earlier African American people and women in general did not have same opportunities and preconditions necessary for success so they could not see the American Dream as the same way as the others.

To achieve this dream one needs to have freedom on an economic as well as political level. One also needs to have their own private property on a legal basis. The law of the country also needs to be such that it keeps those people in mind to give them their basic rights and protection like it promises for every citizen. They need to be sure that whatever they earn or get for themselves will not be seized by anyone. Also according to the American Dream a person will have all kinds of freedom like freedom to make one's own decisions, earn as much one wants etc. One should have the liberty to aim for a better life and live in accordance with the values one believes in. These are essential components of living the dream.

Calling this ideal for a better life as a Dream, may probably signal that it is just a dream and so maybe far away from reality. Many Americans will say by experience that this dream in reality is not exactly as it is portrayed. The American Dream has often been criticized throughout history when slavery existed and only the white men could vote etc. when it was very difficult or almost impossible for many such people to realize their dreams even after living in US. Income inequality among the people of different classes also makes us think that American Dream just might be a far-fetched idea. Even after so many years, the trend has been seen that since the 70s the income inequality has only increased and the rich are getting richer while the lower classes

continue to suffer. Even after knowing about these shortcomings of the American Dream people still continue to pursue it and individuals from other nations are attracted to it.

Even back when this notion of American Dream was being thought of and up till now having one's own home is seen as an example that someone has achieved their dream. Home ownership means one is well off and independent and also shows their financial success. Other things indicative of achievement of American Dream are having one's own business rather than working for someone. One also needs to be educated and provide education to their children while also making sure that the family remains healthy.

In order to give their citizens something similar to the American Dream the other nations are scrutinizing the conditions which will be necessary for that like the country should be developed as the first step. It is also important to have faith in the capitalist system and provide a restriction free trade system and the government should take responsibility of protecting private enterprises. Also there shouldn't be any bias and people of all cultures should benefit.

The Great Gatsby is a 1925 novel which shows how plenty of wealth and luxuriousness have tarnished the intrinsic nature of the American Dream. We can also see how a society which was earlier imagined as classless, have become so focused on class that people have almost divided themselves on the basis of classes. Tom has got his wealth through descent and doesn't seem to care about working hard, while Gatsby has earned his wealth through inappropriate means just to get back his love. He ultimately fails in his effort and is murdered by the end of the novel. They both represent the nature and traits of people of their class. Tom is someone who lives in East Egg where people who have inherited wealth live. People in East Egg are more concerned with appearances and consider themselves wealthy and superior to West Egg because they are

educated and have been rich since generations. While Gatsby who lives in West Egg is one of those people who have recently become rich (called new money) through suspicious means. It is this difference due to which Gatsby can't live near Daisy's home and which makes her out of his reach. Tom treats Gatsby as inferior and he can be called a racist as he thinks that white people are superior and that is why he disrespects Gatsby who once belonged to lower class. He doesn't like that someone from lower class is trying to become his equal. This is in exact opposition to the American Dream where everyone should be treated as equal irrespective of their social class or status.

Gatsby himself doesn't seem to be very confident about his wealth as he knows people in society care about wealth but also about how the person earned the wealth. That's why he lies about his source of his wealth to Nick telling him, his ancestors have left this wealth for her. This is the same reason he praises Daisy, saying "Her voice is full of money". Gatsby considers her as of a higher level than him and to get her love as the best thing he could achieve. So he wants her approval in everything, when she comes to his mansion he shows her his shirts as if to ask her has he reached her level of position. Daisy cries after seeing his shirts as she wishes if Gatsby has been this rich earlier she could have married him. This also shows that how important money is to her that even for loving someone she first thinks of the materialistic benefits. This shows the corruption of the American Dream due to the materialistic tendency of the people during the times.

Fitzgerald has intentionally portrayed Daisy as to be of a high stature as to associate her with the ideal of American Dream. Not just Fitzgerald but many other writers of the 20th century had done this, representing the American Dream through a woman. Gatsby wants to be worthy of Daisy and so as equal in status to her so he wants to join the high social elite class which she

represents. Daisy is more than just his love interest as she is someone who can help him to infiltrate these class divisions and go beyond them to achieve his American Dream. The author has criticized the people living on Long Island whose aristocratic behavior is a hindrance to the American Dream. Daisy by marrying Tom has become a part of the people who have inherited wealth and who don't care about other social classes. She is safe in her richness despite her irresponsible actions while those who belonged to low class like Myrtle and Gatsby have to die.

Another aspect of the dream is criticized by Fitzgerald through the character of Myrtle who represents those people in the 1920's who were too concerned with gathering wealth for themselves. She believes that all her problems in life are due to money and thinks that having more material possessions will help her live a happier life. So, she associates happiness with money and even cheats on her husband for it, becoming Tom's mistress. Even during the 1920s, many people had failed due to their materialistic desires, similarly Myrtle wants to show people that she is urbane and rich even though she is poor and lives in the valley of Ashes. Her behavior is representative of the extravagance people wanted to display in post-world war America when consumerism was increasing by day.

Produced by Miller keeping the Great Depression in mind, the play *Death of a Salesman* published in 1949 show us through the story of a father and his sons, the shortcomings of a capitalist society while they try to get success while simultaneously trying to keep their family together. The play is a criticism of the American Dream and its claim that it is possible for everyone to accomplish. It is this twisted belief which leads the protagonist, the salesman towards his sad demise.

The salesman in the play is Willy Loman who is sixty-three years old and hails from Brooklyn. His mental condition is not stable and though he is a failure as a salesman in real life, he lives in his delusion in which he is a very successful and popular salesman. He uses this delusion to get away from the pains of daily life. Willy is not making any progress at his job, he has to pay mortgage for his home and he can't even grow a vegetable in his backyard, so all is not well for him. This is the reason he creates his fantasy world where he can be proud of himself. As he was himself not able to achieve the American Dream, he believes that it his responsibility to make sure that his sons succeed in life and in this misbelief, he kills himself to leave insurance money for his family.

Willy' relationship with his son is something to be observed carefully because of the importance of the values which are passed from a parent to their children which affects their world view and defines their ideals. It is due to the precariousness of these values which Willy promotes that his sons are not triumphant in life and believe they have something lacking in themselves. Another reason for Loman's family failures is they all care too much about money and material possessions. Although they all love each other and each one of them worries about others, they still don't express it so they are not able to solve their problems by discussing them together as a family. Biff, Happy and Linda all know that Willy is living in an illusion and chasing wrong dreams still they don't discuss it with him together to help him , they just leave him as he is . Willy's wife Linda considers herself "too passive" to get Willy out of his delusions. Willy needed help and as he didn't get it, he ultimately made the worst decision to kill himself.

The play begins with a foreboding description of the house and the neighborhood which gives hint to the readers that something is not right with the house and the dreams of the people who live in this house as home ownership is considered an important aspect of American Dream.

Even though no one told Willy what American Dream means actually, he has made his own perception of it. Willy had a rough childhood as he had no one to take care of him and show him the right path as his father left him when he was just a kid to make money. Similarly his big brother left him to make money. This is the reason Willy only sees money as the true definition of success and always dreams of becoming a salesman like Dave Singleman who had a big fortune. But Willy's dream is too unrealistic, even though he is 63 years old; he still thinks he has time to establish his own business from the scratch and to benefit from it without leaving his home. He already considers himself successful enough and refuses to take Charley's help. Willy doesn't believe that working hard is most important when chasing the dream instead he thinks what's more important is to look good and behave as to please the person you are interacting with. This turns out to be another reason why he fails in life.

Chapter II

Methodology

For the purpose of this thesis, qualitative type of research methods has been used which involves collecting non numerical data and is often used for the purpose of understanding the opinions, perspectives etc. This is important in this thesis as we try to understand the perspectives of the characters on the American Dream and their world view which makes them decide how they will pursue it in the literary works referred. MLA style has been used in the citation of sources because it is used in field of humanities especially the cultural studies and language and arts studies and as in this paper the larger field investigated is the literature ,language and society hence this style has been used. Firstly the meaning of American Dream is being explained and then how this theme is predominant in literature of the U.S. is discussed in the thesis. For this purpose two primary sources have been used which are – The Great Gatsby , a 1925 novel by Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald and the other one is Death of a Salesman, a 1949 stage play written by American playwright Arthur Asher Miller. Moreover many secondary sources have also been used to add new ideas and interpretations to the plot of the literary texts referred. These secondary sources are cited in the bibliography section for further study.

Chapter III

Literature Review

Even though the phrase American Dream was coined in 1931, it had remained part of the lives of Americans for much longer and they have been meaning to achieve it by any means. There have been many works in the literary cannon of America which deal with the theme of American Dream. This notion has always given significance and form to the literature of the U.S. as it encapsulates one's expectations for his country. Some of the works which contain this theme are Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, works of John Steinbeck like *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*, *Self-Reliance* by Emerson and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Samuel Clemens etc.

Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin is one such work. Benjamin Franklin was one of the founding fathers of America and also personifies the American Dream to many. He was so poor when he had come to Pennsylvania that he was almost broke and could hardly afford dinner. But he rose as one of the most important men in America. He invented many things throughout his life for the benefit of the masses. Benjamin Franklin's autobiography is a story of an idealistic young man who had belief in the America's promise and through his determination rose from poverty to wealth. So it represents the basic American Dream ideal of rags to riches. This is one work from the revolutionary period when most of the writings were political. But it was a time of change, people were changing, their culture was changing and so many people were on the journey of finding their self and identity and that is what this work by Franklin represents.

Another writer who has often based his works on the American Dream is John Steinbeck. Two of his such realist novels are *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*, the latter technically

being a novella. Both of these works are about the difficulties faced by the lower working class people at the time of Great Depression. So these stories are about individuals who face destitution and hardship faced by them in an age of economic austerity when they aim for a good life in their attempt to achieve the American Dream. In *Grapes of Wrath*, a family moves to California because of their poor living conditions and to find a better place for farming. But even there the condition is no better showing that American Dream was unattainable for them. In *Of Mice and Men*, George and Lennie are small migrant workers who keep looking for a stable job at a ranch or farm. They hope to save enough money to have their own farm someday. This is their American Dream which they are not able to fulfill at the end.

Self-Reliance published in 1841 is an Essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson is a perfect manifestation of the American Dream ideal which was emanating at the time. It is a renaissance work deals with the ideals existing over a long period forming a part of the American dream. In this work the idea of American dream has been broadened by portrayal of a self-supporting American. It believes in a person who seeing the opportunities available to him in America is important to the nation as he has involved himself in the pursuit of his dream while also thinking about his country. The essay accepts the fact that every individual is different and that true success goes beyond social customs, rationality etc. He wants people to decide for themselves what they want to achieve in life because no one else other than themselves can think about what's best for them.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn written by Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) often seen as one of the great American novels still studied and talked about. In the novel, Huckleberry is a boy who escapes from his home due to his alcoholic father and goes out on his own when he meets a boy named Jim who is a slave. Huckleberry goes against the societal rules of bonding with a slave and becomes his friend and helps him escape through Mississippi river. He does this

because unlike other white people he valued his friendship more than other material comforts. They both want to gain freedom and encounter many difficulties in their path and learn something from each obstacle. Equality, liberty and freedom to do anything in pursuit of happiness are the most important American ideals which are also part of the American dream and these are dealt with in the novel.

So we can see through this literature review how different works written by the American authors convey the ideal of American dream either directly through their experience or indirectly through the stories. The works referred in this thesis to explain the concept of American Dream in literature of the U.S. are *The Great Gatsby* and *Death of a Salesman*. How they are connected to the theme of American dream is discussed in detail in findings and discussion section.

Chapter IV

Findings and Discussion

American Dream: Meaning and Origin

American Dream is something of a characteristic spirit of the people of American community, the beliefs they follow to do something in life and achieve something for themselves. It impels them to make a better life for their own benefit. This ideal of American Dream is often associated with democracy, equality and liberty and other such ideals. Moreover it's the dream of having these ideals available for everybody to enjoy irrespective of their class or social position. The primary idea behind the concept of American Dream is if someone is able to achieve it means that they were able to progress in a financial manner and social manner that is from a lower class to an upper class. So it involves the benefit of social mobility in the upward direction. To achieve the American Dream, it is also essential that one works hard enough because it is the key component of it. One should not dream of being successful without working hard enough, as it will be completely impractical.

Another component to achieve American Dream is perseverance. One should not lose hope even when one fails but should keep going until he reaches success. Persistently working hard makes people innovate new ways to achieve their goals. These are the things important to focus on if someone wants to get rich from being poor. This idea is often referred to as "from rags to riches".

It is said that the term "American Dream" was formed by a man named James Truslow Adams who was a writer and he had written much on the American history. He had defined it with the

following words "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement". So everyone in society should have the opportunity for a better life irrespective of the class they belong to or which region or place they were born into so they should not become hurdles in their life goals.

The way the American Dream has originated is ingrained in the document which was at the time of the foundation of the United States, this document is called the United States Declaration of Independence. It was the founding fathers of America that each individual in the nation would have opportunity to have liberty in the pursuit of happiness and that every man in the nation is equal and should be treated equal. These are also the very important things to be followed if the American Dream has to be achieved. Moreover even when the preamble of America was written these notions were kept in mind and so these ideas are also found in it. It is of great importance as it is something that was part of the constitution, the very document which speaks about the principles on which the state was formed and the government will work. The constitution promises to protect the right to liberty of every citizen and also to make sure that the government does not ignore these rights becoming tyrannical.

American Dream through history

Though the basic components of American Dream which are happiness and liberty have remained the same, American Dream itself has changed and had many forms throughout history. Earlier America was colonized and later it gained independence giving rise to Declaration of Independence and with these times American Dream was also different.

During the time when the dream was being formed, people had the idea of moving towards regions in the west. People had this belief that life was much better in the lands situated towards

west, they even considered them better than their own land. This was also expressed by John Murray who was Governor of Virginia in 1774, so the dream was kind of a gold rush where people wanted something more or the best. There was a kind of greed among the people to look for better even if they had the best.

The 19th century was a time when there was an influx of large numbers of people immigrating to America leaving their native country probably due to farming problems, high taxes etc. . The other reason could have been persecution of many common people due to strict political or religious rules. These people were attracted by the notion of opportunity that they would find in America and that there were no restriction on anybody due to the class they belonged so that they be limited to gain a particular level of success. The class system worked in a different way in America than in these European countries from where the mass had emigrated. These people after settling in this new place began searching for work but there were limited number of jobs and so they were exploited and made to feel like 'other'.

It was also during the 19th century that James W. Marshall found gold at Sutter's Mill. This is when Gold Rush began in America. Gold had been discovered earlier many times before but this one was different as people from far away started moving into California to try their luck in getting rich. California was made a state of the US when earlier it was not part of it. Though some people were successful in their attempts here, others spent whatever money they had saved and went bankrupt. This was one of those incidents which till today keeps the people motivated with the thought that it is possible for anyone to be successful in America. Some people still dream of becoming a sudden success just like it happened at the time of gold rush.

It was only in 20th century that the phrase “American Dream” had got so popular when it was used in a famous book named “Epic of America” by the author James Truslow Adams in the year 1931. In his book he has explained the different versions of the dream that have existed during the years. He has also explained why such a large number of people had emigrated to the US and how the governments of these countries in Europe failed to recognize the reasons the people were leaving their country.

While discussing the American Dream, James has focused more on the social aspect of this dream and less on the materialistic aspect like owning a car or other comforts or dreaming about earning more and more. He believed American Dream is more about a person realizing their potential at its fullest irrespective of which class or region they were born into. A person should be known for the work he has done, what he has achieved and not just because of the circumstances of his birth.

At this time country was growing and the rich were getting successful as they already had more wealth so naturally they had more opportunities for further growth. They had instituted such a social strata where the rich could get richer. Still the belief in American Dream was so strong that despite these problems, it was possible for every citizen to achieve success and live a happy life. This is because American Dream has always been a big thing, a desire for personal development and to show one’s capability unbounded by any hurdles that come in their way like the social stratification which were made only for the sake of higher classes. Rather it will be a dream of the development of any person uncurbed by these barriers so that every ordinary person of even the lower class can benefit.

So different forms of freedom are an important part of the American Dream which permit each person to chase a happy and successful life. Even in this when we say a happy and successful life, it will have different meaning for each individual. So each individual in America has to have his own version of American Dream with a different meaning than others. They can do this because they know whatever it is, they will get the chance to follow this dream of theirs due to so many opportunities.

How American dream shaped the politics

Just like all other concepts, American Dream has also not been free of politics being a practical concept as it is. One of such movements was women's suffrage movement which argued for the women's right to vote. Earlier the women were not seen on an equal social level as men and were not allowed to participate in political matters not even speak about them. No one could imagine women voting. Due to the efforts of many important women who participated in women suffrage movement, the 19th Amendment was passed which finally gave women the equality that they deserved giving them the right to vote. The right to vote was essential for the women to have as it was promised in the constitution that everyone would be treated equal and so this was non-negotiable. So the women had realized that the core quality of the American Dream which is equality would only be possible if they had a better position in society. And what could be a better way of achieving this than by having voting rights, an essential element of democracy? Not only this but many other suffrage movements like the one for the black people voting rights, were fueled by the American Dream ideal of living a good life by virtue of hard work. Both the women and the black people could only be said to have access to American Dream if they had equality on every level especially politically and were allowed to participate in these matters.

It was important for the African American people to be free from the racial discrimination and segregation in order to realize the existence of the American Dream because without these it doesn't have any meaning. It was this desire to be treated as equal and to have proper rights which gave birth to the civil rights movement in America. The African American people were not allowed to enter certain restaurants, hotels etc. and also had to face many barriers at work place. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 changed all this by prohibiting all such forms of discrimination. So these political movements and several others played a key role in shaping the American Dream which in turn was shaping the politics of the time.

About the novel The Great Gatsby

The Great Gatsby which is set during the time of Roaring Twenties, is a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald who was an essayist, short story writer and also a novelist in 20th century America. He has often written about the Jazz Age, when people were exuberant, stylish and indulging in everything excessively. This age which was during the 1920's was given this name by Fitzgerald himself and had its own particular music and dance styles. The Great Gatsby showcases both tragedy and victory and is an accurate description of American society of the time.

The story of the novel is narrated by Nick Carraway who is from Minnesota in Midwest. He returned after the war and move to the East in a region known as West Egg where newly rich people live. Soon he meets Daisy who is her cousin. He also meets his neighbor Jay Gatsby who is a millionaire. He observes that Gatsby spends lavishly at his parties and doesn't care how many people come. He meets Jordan at one of these parties who tells him about Gatsby's love interest who is none other his distant cousin Daisy. Soon he become friends with Gatsby and

want to reunite him with Daisy. Though Gatsby and Daisy come together for a brief time but it doesn't last as Tom insults Gatsby and Daisy refuses to accept his love publicly.

Daisy's husband Tom is in affair with a woman named Myrtle Wilson who Daisy hits with Gatsby's car in an accident. Tom who shows contempt for Gatsby informs Myrtle's husband that it was Gatsby who killed her and he kills Gatsby in his mansion. So Gatsby's obsession for Daisy leads to his Death.

The novel was not very successful at that time, but later it became so popular over the years that it is now considered a classic. Currently it is something people might use to have a look at the kind of chaotic life people were living in the 1920s, after the events of world war. During this time, though there was growth in the country and people were flamboyant, there was also a lot of corruption which was a barrier to the country's proper growth. The situation in the country at this time was much like shown in the Valley of Ashes where the rich got richer and the poor people suffered. The guilty party behind this situation was the government itself as they applied tax method which was good just for the wealthy and when there was any dispute between the laborer and the management, the government supported the management. Other things like people enjoying the benefits of the economic boom that came in America after the war and illegal liquor businesses which people were running unrestricted are also correctly represented in the novel. Gatsby's mansion was in West Egg which was an area where newly self-made rich people lived. They made money probably by illegal businesses which was the source of their sudden wealth. Fitzgerald has taken this idea of the wealth made by Gatsby in this way from the parties he went to. These parties were held in Long Island which played a role in providing the nightclubs with alcohol during these times of prohibition (ban on alcohol) in America.

The cover design of the novel was done by a man who made movie posters and Fitzgerald really liked it, though he didn't like the title "The Great Gatsby" which he himself has given to the novel after pondering over many others titles none of which could probably have been as popular. Though Fitzgerald thought he had written a great literary work, the sales of the copies of this novel tell a different story. The sales were very low and during the second reprinting, many copies were not even sold. It was in 1950s when the novel again got popular and rose to fame so much that it started to be taught in high school. With time there have been many films made in the novel adding to its popularity.

Significance of the title: The Great Gatsby

Fitzgerald is one of those writers who believed that the first impression of their work in the minds of the reader comes from reading the title. That is why he was so confused over deciding the title for his novel and he almost made a list before finally choosing The Great Gatsby. Still after publication, he was not satisfied with it. The other alternatives he thought of were Ash-Heaps and Millionaires, Gold-Hatted Gatsby, The High-Bouncing Lover, On the Road to West Egg, Trimalchio, Under the Red, White, and Blue Trimalchio in West Egg.

But finally, he chose The Great Gatsby and we all know how that turned out to be a good decision seeing the success of the novel. Though the novel was discarded by critics and the readers when it was first published. It was only after Fitzgerald's death and the novel being printed in Armed Services edition that it got huge success and recognition. The novel has a name in the title which means that this novel is about this person that is Gatsby and the story will revolve around him, so he is the protagonist. Another possibility is when the someone's name is used in the title of a work is that it is a biographical or autobiographical work. This is also true in

this case as the novel tells us about the whole history of Gatsby, since he was born and till, he was dead.

The word great could have been used to acclaim Gatsby, as he was born to poverty but later rose to become a high class rich man all on his own. He throws lavish parties which are luxurious and talked about in New York everywhere. Gatsby is always surrounded by many important rich people. He drives a yellow Rolls Royce, which was the most popular car at that time. So these descriptions of Gatsby's wealth and importance given in the novel are an attempt to prove how "great" he is and to emphasize his greatness this word has also been included in the title by the novelist. Gatsby is not called great just because of his money but because of his ambitions since he was a kid and his determination to realize these ambitions which made him successful in life. When he was young, he had made a schedule for himself because he knew that he belonged of a humble background and would have to work hard in life and that's what he did.

Another interpretation could be to mock Gatsby's state in the novel. Even though the readers are first fascinated by Gatsby's wealth and consider him a good person and a great man they soon realize all that all that glitters is not gold. Gatsby has not accumulated his wealth though noble means but by indulging with the wrong crowd probably criminals. He is rumored to have been involved in the bootlegging business. Gatsby also seems to know Meyer Wolfsheim who is a suspicious man, involved in the underground business. So the word great could also be in an ironic connotation for Gatsby's supposed greatness.

Gatsby could have also been considered "great" because of his spiritual greatness that is he is the one person in the novel who appears to show some morality. Even after becoming so rich, he lived a simple life, had a simple bedroom. Even the parties he held were not for his own pleasure

but in the hope of seeing Gatsby at his mansion someday. For Gatsby relationships and friendships were more important than all the material things and money. He smiled in a way that people use to trust him. Nick considered him a good friend and better than all the East Egg people like Tom and Daisy when he died. Wolfsheim considered him equal to a family member. Everything he did in life was for his innocent dream of reuniting with his lost love which was Daisy. While Daisy was indifferent to his love and valued money and material comforts more. Another incident reflecting his greatness was that after Daisy had hit Myrtle with his car, he neither told anyone the truth nor did he run away but accepted the blame for Daisy's mistake and made it his own which became the cause of his death.

The American Dream in the novel

The Great Gatsby novel got more success than was thought of it and was positively appreciated by the people. It was able to achieve this feat because the author portrayed a mirror reflection of the society of the 20th century in America which is done by the different characters in the novel showing us how the American people were delusional at that time with this idea of American dream.

There is heavy use of symbols in the novel, which gives us an insight into the geographic sense to be derived of this American dream. One area is where people live in poverty and it is hard for them to survive this area falls under west region. The other one will be the east including the New York where people already have a lot of money but still, they have business or plans going on to make more money for themselves. Those people who live at this place know the real meaning of the dream and those who live in the west will sadly never know about this. This idea seems to be disseminated by the novel. So if a person gets successful in America or not and his

identity, these things are determined by the place where a person is that is he should be at the right place. People are fixated over living in the New York as it is considered best place to realize this dream.

Though both the west and the east could be considered rough if seen from different perspective but Midwest region is said to have a western lifestyle or cowboy lifestyle. People from this region then move to the east for a better living. Some people of the west believe that in doing this they are becoming immoral. At this time some consider the American dream was dying and Fitzgerald has used Gatsby to portray this thought. He dreams of more than he could possibly gather and it is a dying dream. The society portrayed through the novel at that time is one which believes in the possession of things is more important for happiness and success than by achieving them by means of working hard. The integrity of the people is shattered in such a society.

Gatsby's Character and his Dream

Gatsby was born to poor parents and so always had a desire to be rich. It was not something which anyone taught him but he thought of this on his own. He was from the Midwest region and believed if he had money he could do anything and this belief became a part of his personality. His desire to become rich was mainly inspired by his love for Daisy who belonged to a rich family but he couldn't marry her because he was poor. This thing had really hurt him and he decided he will become rich at any cost. While Gatsby was trying his best to acquire wealth time was passing and Daisy couldn't wait long so she married a man named Tom Buchanan who was a wealthy one at the time. He was of her status and could provide her with everything unlike Gatsby at that time. Gatsby was overwhelmed by Daisy marrying another man and it made him

begin his journey of gathering wealth. He also started living in West Egg when he was about thirty years old. His reason for shifting there was also Daisy who lived near this place.

When Gatsby gets rich he tries to display his wealth and success to Daisy in many ways and on many occasions. He later realizes that his dream is about to collapse as Daisy is not ready to admit that she does not love Tom Buchanan her husband when Gatsby asks her to say so. She had developed some feelings for Tom and didn't want to lie and as a result Gatsby had to assume liability for her activity of having a brief romance with him after getting to know how rich and successful he has got. This later in time gets Gatsby killed.

Gatsby had deeply fallen in love with Daisy when he was just an officer and was about to go abroad on being called during the war time. During that time there was no similarity between them and they belonged to completely different social classes and had different status in society. Daisy was young and beautiful and someone a lot of people would seek to marry and they both looked at each other in a romantic manner. Gatsby's own dream of becoming successful remains mingled with his dream of getting Daisy and so she clearly represents his version of American dream.

The difference in the American dreams of Daisy and Gatsby and also their personality is that Daisy gave more importance to money and a comfortable lifestyle while Gatsby only cared about love. It was only because of his love for her that he wanted to get rich and not for himself as he was already satisfied with what he had. Daisy didn't wait for him and married another man just because he was rich and could give her whatever she wanted and a comfortable lifestyle and unlike Gatsby at that time. She was not the one for whom love was more important than money

and so she didn't marry Gatsby when he was poor. But she actually became interested in him when she saw how rich he has got and also flirted with him despite being married.

Daisy represents that version of the American dream which is materialistic and devoid of emotions. She is a shallow person and careless too as she acts without thinking about consequences. When she sees Gatsby's wealth, she briefly becomes attracted to him and tries to have a romantic relationship with him but it is Gatsby who has to suffer the consequence of this action of hers. She is like those rich people who break things and make a mess because they have a lot of money and do not care and expect other people to clean that up. This kind of American dream only focuses on prosperity of only a single individual and not of everyone.

Even then it is not Daisy who can be blamed entirely as she herself belonged to a generation where children are influenced by the wealth and the power it provides. It was like Daisy wasn't making her own decision when she had to marry Tom, it was like this decision of hers was influenced by many things. She had a feeling on the inside to make her choice to maybe wait for Gatsby but her final decision she made to marry Tom, a rich man was somehow influenced by people around her and her social status had a role to play. It is also possible that she had some love for Tom when she decided to marry her but mainly it can be seen it was only for her own material gain and desire for great wealth.

So actually, the American dream does not seem to exist during the course of the novel as it seems like it had already vanished and being replaced by a lust of more and more wealth and materialistic possessions. This is seen in the case of Daisy and also Gatsby as he acts naively and is ready to go to any lengths to gain possession of her beloved. He becomes the sole destructor of his own American dream as a result of this. This corruption of the American dream can also be seen in

the guests how used to attend Gatsby's parties. They used to come to these parties when not even being invited as they were attracted to all the wealth and luxuriousness of the big villa and their desire for acquiring more than they already had was a never-ending one. Leaving their morals behind these people leaped to gain more power and material possessions which brought them far away from the freedom and justice they always hoped for. The novel has made it an illusion which the characters in the novel believe in which the narrator of the novel also accepts at various instances.

Symbolism and representation of the Dream in The Great Gatsby:

Gatsby lives in a place called the West Egg where those people who live who got wealthy by the virtue of doing illegal or criminal business even. These kinds of people have recently got rich and like to show off their wealth by buying expensive cars etc. This is what Gatsby does by maintaining a big villa, expensive cars and partying extravagantly. But these kinds of people don't have the appropriate social skills. They are also not considered to have class and etiquettes and said to imitate the East Egg. Unlike people from West Egg, people who live in East Egg know how to behave socially in a proper way and they don't deliberately show off their wealth as they always had money. East Egg people consider themselves superior to West Egg in their manners, class and style. No matter which one consider themselves superior than others both are no better than other in terms of morals. This can be seen from the fact that all those people who come to Gatsby's parties behave wildly and without manners abusing each other. While both Tom and Daisy living in their East Egg are frauds in reality and are not what they pretend to be. This gives us an idea that in pursuit of American Dream though some were able to get success and money it also ruined those who were not able to handle so much wealth.

When Tom takes Nick to meet his mistress Myrtle, Nick observes the depressing nature of the valley of ashes, which is a symbolic place in the novel. Nick sees it as highly depressing and it seems like a place formed due to neglect and carelessness of the people around. Daisy and her husband Tom are also rich and careless people who make mistakes and expect someone else to take responsibility. These both were the kind of those people who would cause destruction and then recoil back into their rich homes and money. That is how the valley of ashes was made, the rich people in the west egg and east egg lived in their big villas with no worry about how the factories a little far from there were ruining the nearby places with their waste. This shows the low morals of these rich people and the other people had to suffer due to this inequality in terms of wealth. The valley of ashes is an area which appears gray due to the dust and ashes coming from nearby factories and it fills the area with smoke making it look dark and depressing. People who live in this area live in poverty and have to suffer while rich people in east and west egg enjoy their lives and live lavishly.

There is very popular mention of a green light in the novel. It is situated at the East Egg dock near Daisy's home. It is a very symbolic figure and has had many interpretations. The green light can be seen at night to warn boats but it fades in the morning which depicts how Daisy was a manifestation of American Dream for Gatsby earlier but this dream becomes unattainable for him. Gatsby got rich not by fair means but by illegal means of business. The green color of the light may also indicate how Gatsby felt jealous because even after getting rich Gatsby still could not feel equal to Daisy as he could not live in East Egg. Though he had an almost equal amount of money as Tom, Daisy's husband still Gatsby couldn't live in East Egg because of the social barrier between the two Eggs which Gatsby was not able to overcome even with his money. The green light also represents American dream in a way as though Gatsby looks at it from his West

Egg lawn, he is not able to grasp it, that is he is not able to live in East Egg. Daisy is unattainable for him.

Reflections of Great Gatsby to American Society:

Though Fitzgerald's valley of ashes never existed in the real world, it was based on a real place called the Corona Ash Dump where all the ashes from the companies were dumped. In the novel the valley seems to be created due to neglect of people whose sole purpose was the pursuit of more and more money. Gatsby is such an American who wants success and see his American dream fulfilled though pursuit of money. This is the behavior of a typical American but ironically money was the only thing that led to wrecking of American dream in the first place.

In the novel in this valley a man named George Wilson lives whose wife Myrtle is the mistress of Tom Buchanan and is run down by Daisy when she is driving a car fast and carelessly. After this incident, George Wilson looks on the road through the eyes of the figure on the billboard near their house and says that the eyes saw it all. By it he meant that eyes of the God saw what happened and who killed his wife. What this means is that though rich people with low morals who were responsible for creating such a place like valley of ashes where the poor ones had to suffer, God looks down on them. The author has tried to imply that American people's greed for money and materialistic tendency has led to America becoming a wasteland of morals which God will now judge. This condition of America was in the 1920s when the society was devoid of moral and social values and people had the wrong illusion of American dream. There was greed among the people were getting cynic.

What the writer has tried to portray that even though the American dream at that time was already ruined still people were hoping to achieve it and be successful. Another example is also

shown by a driver who is drunk and driving a car. Even though the wheel of the car comes off when he gets into accident still he tries to move it and drive it. The broken car becomes a symbol for the social standards of the people at that time and their moral values. By this hilarious example the author wants to mock the attempt by the American people to revive the dream which they themselves had destroyed. These people had the delusion that they can still achieve the American dream just like drunken driver's delusion that he can still drive the car. There are many other examples provided in the novel in favor of this idea.

American remorse of Past and Future

The American people became materialistic during the 20th century so their innocence was lost but they try to recover it in their pursuit of American dream. Similarly, Gatsby tries to get back what he lost in the past, the opportunity to unite with Daisy, to marry her. This idea of regaining what has been lost in the past is intermittent throughout the novel. So, by observing Gatsby we can observe the behavior of all Americans at the time.

Gatsby is a prime example of a corrupt American dream; he tries to gain more and more money through illegitimate means. As a result of this he has turned into a hollow person He accurately shows how the American dream has turned into something which only deals with materialistic possessions. There is also some part of Gatsby's dream which is not corrupt; his desire to reunite with Daisy. He has this innocent desire to get back what he lost in his past. The money he earned has given him the hope that he could get Daisy's love for which he had been waiting for years. In the end Gatsby has failed to achieve American dream but it does not mean that American dream is in itself an illusion. Gatsby's failure tells us that materialism and deception has risen so much that it has masked the good qualities like hard work and integrity among

people. Jay rues the day when he left Daisy to go to war. It is this understanding and regret of his that makes Gatsby different from the other characters present in the novel.

Some may see the novel as just a love story in which two people who liked each other and wanted to marry couldn't do so but later almost reunited and could have a happy life together. But this story has more to it, it is also about a man who sees his beloved as personification of his American dream and is ready to do whatever it takes to fulfill his dream. Even gather all the money by illegal means. Gatsby is disheartened of the opportunity he lost in the past and now wants his girl back from Tom to whom she was married. Even though there is still a chance that Daisy might leave Tom to be with him because she still has feelings for him but still Gatsby doesn't feel satisfied. He still wishes that he could go back in time and marry her at that point in time and on that day when they first saw each other and fell in love. At that time, their love was innocent. In the end Gatsby dies without his desire fulfilled when George Wilson shoots him to death in his swimming pool. With Gatsby's death his dream also dies which is also to represent how the dreams of those Americans in the 20th century died when they were so eager to do anything to achieve it. At that time people thought they could achieve their American dream if they are able to gather as many materialistic possessions and as much money. They failed to realize that it was this only that had led to the breaking of the dream and they kept trying to repair it with this means. As a result, it didn't lead to their success or growth but only added to more disorder.

The formation of Gatsby's dream

The Great Gatsby was a novel written by an American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald and was originally published in 1925. The novel had great success as people felt really connected to the

story and it became the author's first successful novel. The author received wide praise from people for this work. This work focuses on the dreams and aspirations of the American people during the time of the roaring twenties. This description is quite accurate with respect to the thinking of people during that time. This attitude is portrayed in the novel by the help of a character called Jay Gatsby who was given the name James Gatz by his parents who were poor. He was born in Midwest region and belonged to a family which suffered due to poverty. He later meets a man named Dan Cody who was a millionaire. This man taught him a lot and made him a gentleman. He taught him how to behave and all the ways of the aristocratic people. Gatsby had thought that if he served Cody well enough, Cody would give him something. Jay was surprised when on Cody's death he didn't get anything, he got none of Dan's money.

He met Daisy when he was a military officer and was stationed in Louisville near Daisy's home. There he saw Daisy for the first time and fell in love with her. He didn't admire her just because of her beauty but because she possessed all the qualities he desired like she belonged to a high class and had a wealthy family. He admired her quality of life. This admiration of him would continue till the end of the novel and would ultimately lead to his death. So Daisy Fay plays the role of femme fatale in this story.

Gatsby was himself surprised when he confessed to Daisy and she in turn replied she also loves him. Though she had other suitors of the same social class as that of hers Daisy also chose Gatsby as she considered him politely a little fool and was impressed by the things he could do. These things in reality were nothing much special but maybe it was just Daisy's infatuation for Gatsby when she first saw him. Although it seems like their love would develop but Gatsby has to leave for New York suddenly as he got orders to prepare for the war in Europe.

Gatsby has to leave because of responsibilities and because he has to be in equal status to that of Daisy's in order to marry her. But Daisy's love for him is not strong to withstand the social pressure or her desire for money. Maybe money is more important to her and she marries a rich man Tom Buchanan who lives in East Egg. This is the reason Gatsby tries to become rich by any means because he wants nothing to be left to chance. He couldn't be with her due to money in the past and he doesn't want it to happen again. So he is even ready to earn money by bootlegging alcohol which was illegal because alcohol was prohibited at the time. He even buys a house as close as possible to her house. Then he organizes big parties to get her attention and is even successful at this attempt as she is attracted to his wealth instantly. When she sees how successful he has become and what he did to be with her she again falls in love with him. But soon Gatsby realized that it was just infatuation when she says she won't leave her husband for him. It is Gatsby who has to suffer again for their brief romance as eventually he is killed for loving her. In his pursuit of Daisy, Gatsby completely changed as a person, he was a very different guy as James Gatz when he worked under Cody. But now he is a rich man who is proud of his achievements and is a completely different individual with big ideals. Even the people who come to his parties doesn't know him at all, they believe he is just a mystery man. They don't know where he has come from or how he got so rich. No one knows the secret of his new wealth.

Even the readers of the novel are not able to completely understand Gatsby as a character. Though he is the character about whom the most is described by the narration of Nick Carraway, still there remains a confusion as to the real nature of Gatsby. Though he seems to be a hero in the public sphere, someone who recently got rich by hard work and invites everyone to his lavish parties. There is still doubt about his real nature in the private life. No one knows how he deals with people in his business, what kind of business he runs. It may be an illegal business or he

may be involved in crime. He also seems to have made good arrangements so that no one knows about all this. He seems to have assumed the manners of Dan Cody, the millionaire he worked for. He tries to imitate Cody and his aristocratic lifestyle. He has got so used to this imitation that he has forgot his earlier self as James Gatz. He remains so involved in this that he cannot remain calm and is always involved in something so he remains restless. Another reason for this is that he tries to do something which is not possible, that is to relive the past, he believes he can correct whatever wrongs happened in the past. Ultimately this obsession leads to his sadly demise.

Though we can say that he got his money by bootlegging alcohol and so is not as innocent as he seems, there are still some good qualities in him which makes people and the audience believe in him. He represents the American dream at various levels and readers feel sad of his untimely death, being murdered for something he didn't do. One can say he just died in pursuit of his beloved. Nick is the only character who observes everything and believes there is good in Gatsby. He even considers Gatsby as his true friend and an innocent lover of Daisy. He believes that Gatsby is better than everyone else he knows in the West and East Eggs, this can be proved with his "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together". Even though Gatsby got rich by suspicious means, Nick still believes that he deserves everything he has hence use of the word "worth".

Daisy Buchanan as Jay Gatsby's Representation of the American Dream

Earlier when Gatsby was young, just like any other person of his age, he dreamed about his own personal success more than anything else. But it all changed when he first saw Daisy, he decided to commit himself to gaining her love just like many people commit themselves to chase their American Dream. When Gatsby saw her for the first time he fell in love and looked at her which

if anyone would see would say that he looked very romantically. Since then, there has been no limit to Gatsby's love for Daisy and he does everything just for the sake of her. But sadly, Daisy doesn't exhibit the same devotion for him and she doesn't even wait for him to come back from war when he had to leave during world war. She marries another man named Tom who is wealthy and can take care of her material needs. So, love is not that important to Daisy. When Gatsby returns from war and gets to know about her marriage, he is determined to get her back no matter what it takes. He decides he will get very rich anyhow so that she becomes attracted to him again. So all the money he earns is to impress her. We can also see this from his expenditure on his frequent parties, he doesn't care how much money is spent at these parties or how many people come. He just expects that Daisy will one day come to one of his parties and attracted by the extravagance of them like buffets, orchestra etc. will want to meet him and talk to him. So his goal for life wasn't to achieve his American Dream through getting wealthy but being good enough for Daisy so that he can get her back. So we can see this key difference in their dreams as Gatsby's dream was intangible while that of Daisy was a materialistic one. This difference is the reason they are an incompatible match destined to fail as a romantic couple.

Daisy loves the idea of money and the comforts that come with it more than any particular person like Gatsby. This is the reason she didn't wait for Gatsby and married someone else. Though Gatsby knows about this flaw of Gatsby, he just doesn't want to face it as it will ruin all the romantic interest he had for her. So, Gatsby continues chasing his love, not accepting the shallowness of his dream. So, the dream has two parts, the one depicted by Daisy is disfigured and the other one represented by Gatsby is the virtuousness of it.

Daisy is someone who seemingly doesn't have sympathy or other sentiments as she had always had the habit of first making things worse and then leaving them for someone else to correct it.

As soon as things get difficult, she would seek the wealthy comforts to make herself feel better and not caring at all about others. This is similar to the nature of the American Dream which is only concerned with the welfare of individual and it's not meant to be for everyone's prosperity.

American Dream charms people to chase it in a way that is deceptive. When someone first looks at it, it is just above suspicion just like Daisy was when Gatsby saw her for the first time. He created a perfect image of Daisy when he first saw her, this image was more perfect than Daisy herself. When Gatsby returned from war and saw her again she was not able to match his ideal image which was actually an illusion. Then later when he actually meets her in his mansion, there is now not much meaning left to what he has been chasing all along. Just like the significance of green light was gone when he met her, the importance of his dream has almost ended. So Daisy who is personification of Gatsby's American dream has been used by the author to show the enchantment of the American Dream which first captivates people then leads them on a path which ruins them.

Sometimes people get too preoccupied with the American Dream and go on a downward spiral towards nothing. In this condition the American Dream becomes disturbing for the person. This was the flaw in Gatsby's pursuit that he left everything just to reunite with Daisy and even when he found out that she was not the person he loved still he couldn't stop chasing her. Gatsby knew that Daisy had hit Myrtle with the car but still he didn't tell anybody to save her. So even after she didn't accept his love and didn't leave Tom to be with him still he was following his ideal dream of her perfect image. He had gone so deep into her love that there was nothing else left in his life so once she refused to be with him he had lost interest in everything and probably accepted death to save Daisy. He had made pursuit of Daisy as an important part of himself and he couldn't survive without it. So there was no way left for him to escape from this pattern.

American Dream Quotes in the novel

“He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey.” (Fitzgerald 53)

When Nick saw Gatsby for the first time, he saw him smiling and found himself unable to properly describe this smile. Nick believes that Gatsby’s smile will bring confidence to a person who has seen it. He believes it is not possible to describe Gatsby’s smile by simple words so here he is using complex phrases to explain its effect on someone. Anyone who watches his smile feels they have been provided authentication and consolation by someone with great experience and view of the world. They feel like they have been chosen. But in reality, Gatsby is actually not providing any of these, he is just giving a performance. So, his smile does not show his emotions, he has just perfected himself to behave in a way that the person interacting with him

feels assured and important. We can see the hollowness of this whole thing as Gatsby is performing and the other person is just wanting to be assured and be trusted in. Gatsby has been living with this persona since a young age, when he was just 17. Gatsby has great imagination and he is a hopeful person, these qualities help him to maintain this role.

“Anything can happen now that we’ve slid over this bridge,’ I thought; ‘anything at all. . . .’ Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder.” (Fitzgerald 74)

This is when Gatsby and Nick are driving in Gatsby’s car on the Queensboro bridge which provides the transit between Long Island and the Valley of Ashes into the city. They are driving there to have some lunch. The city of New York provides endless opportunities and so to Nick it seems that Gatsby has no limitations there and he can achieve anything. Nick also describes the view of the city one gets on the bridge; he believes it is like if one is viewing the city for the first time. Since America and especially the city they are headed towards that is New York offers unlimited possibility to chase dreams , it makes Nick feel like Gatsby will be capable of anything and that the city has been crucial in Gatsby’s success. Nick wants to hint that like Gatsby achieved success though he had no help from anyone and belonged to a poor family and this kind of success is only possible in U.S.

We drew in deep breaths . . . as we walked back . . . through the cold vestibules, unutterably aware of our identity with this country for one strange hour, before we melted indistinguishably into it again. (Fitzgerald 187)

This is in chapter 9 when Nick describes the Midwest when he was about to go out of Chicago to go towards the east. He was going by train and was in college at the time. He and his friends

considered themselves westerners in a real sense. Here Fitzgerald is trying to tell us how Nick found this emptiness and superficiality on reaching east in comparison to what Nick had seen before. So, he had probably already abandoned the American Dream and went to Valley of Ashes where there was nothing. The narrator says this story is actually a story about west to where he and many other characters belonged. Then he says all the wrong things that have took place were simply because he and other characters from the west were not able to adapt themselves in the East region.

Why they came East I don't know. . . I had no sight into Daisy's heart, but I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game. (Fitzgerald 8)

When Nick met Tom for the first time he had several doubts about Tom's worth. Tom has a lot of money and is able to get anything in life because of his good physique, looks and wealth. To Nick it seems that there is nothing more to Tom than this and the only big achievement of his life is that he was a good football player at Yale during his early years. So Nick believed that Tom never faced any challenges in life except the commotion at the football games when he used to play. He wants to criticize how Tom's actions are purposeless as he just thinks about his old football games and how he played well instead of doing something new in his present life. So this unveils a new idea that Tom was similar to Gatsby in one respect that they both focused on the past too much and had a desire to relieve it. This constant desire of nostalgia and an obsession to change the past is what got Gatsby killed. For Tom, Nick thinks that he could have a better life if he gets over his nostalgia for which he will have to stop being too proud of his achievements and privileges.

But [Doctor Eckleburg's] eyes, dimmed a little by many countless days under the sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground. (Fitzgerald 27)

The Valley of Ashes is situated between Long Island and New York City. Here an optometry advertisement of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg can be seen on an old faded billboard. It seems as though the eyes of that billboard are observing people and whatever they are doing. This is symbolic to God watching down on all the Americans and judging them. Nick had seen it for the first time when he came to New York with Tom to meet his paramour, Myrtle. Once the billboard was large and magnificent and everyone looked at it but now with passage of time it had become dull and dirty because of natural degradation. So now no one pays attention to it which shows the shallowness of stardom and wealth. At a later time in the story, when Myrtle has died, George Wilson compares eyes of Dr. Eckleburg which are faded due to decaying of the board, with the eyes of God. This has been done by the author to suggest the loss in belief of God by the people after the first world war as many stopped going to places of worship. Another way to evaluate this could be that the eyes represent mindfulness and clearness of vision, as a significant subject of the book is Gatsby's inability to properly participate in the real world. Instead he is lost in his fantasy world of nostalgia.

[H]e stretched out his arms toward the dark water. . . . I . . . distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away. . . . When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished. . . . (Fitzgerald 24)

This is when Nick observes for the first time that Gatsby is standing in his West Egg lawn and staring at the green light which is near the dock of the Buchanans mansion. To Nick, the light appears very minute. Gatsby has stretched his arm towards that light as if he is trying to grab it.

By trying to reach the green light, Gatsby is trying to reach towards something he can never get in this case it is Daisy. So, the green light for Gatsby stands for Daisy, his first and true love. The green color of the light can also be seen as a symbol to represent money which has same color notes. The novel is much about wealth as it is the wealthy who are important and no one cares about the poor people. No one cared about Gatsby when he was poor and worked for a rich man, even Daisy didn't marry him. But when he got rich everyone wanted to meet him. Similarly just because Buchanans are rich they get whatever they want in life. While the Wilsons have to suffer just because of their social status. So, this symbolic representation show how the green light is out of reach and its importance.

Comparing Fitzgerald and Gatsby and their American Dream

Scott Fitzgerald was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Francis Scott in his name comes from one of his distant cousin who had the same name and had written a poem, the lines of this poem later became a part of the national anthem of America. So, we can already see his and his family's patriotic nature and contribution to the nation of America. Their family had also moved to New York that is the reason he has experience of this play and knows about it so he has also made it and important place in his novel The Great Gatsby. In the novel New York has been used to depict the typical condition of America during the 1920s and this was the place where bootlegging and other illegal business benefitted in the roaring twenties. He neglected his studies several times since childhood due to which he was expelled from school and also from university.

Fitzgerald had also participated in the First World War for his country serving as second lieutenant in the army. This is similar to the characters he created as both Nick and Gatsby too

had participated in the first world war in the novel. So, this is another instance when Fitzgerald had constructed the plot on his own life experiences.

He had started writing because he wanted to leave something in case he died. Several of his initial works were rejected by publishers but he believed in the American Dream of success and kept writing and sending his works for publication. His *This Side of Paradise* got good reception and sales. He started to earn good with his works and became wealthy. This enabled him to live a high class life and drinking heavily and people began to call him a playboy. So he rose from being born into a middle class family to living a high class life. So he himself can be said to represent the American Dream. He has also incorporated this into his novel through Gatsby who was born to poor parents but got wealthy all on his own.

There are some other aspects of his life too which are similar to the plot of the novel which he had probably not intended. The novel is set at the time of prohibition when alcohol was banned in America and some people who were selling it illegally got very rich like Gatsby as people were addicted to alcohol at this time and wanted it by any means. Fitzgerald himself suffered due to alcoholism during the 1920s which had remained a problem in his family. He died in 1939 from a heart probably induced by his alcohol addiction. So on careful study of his life, we can see the similarity between Gatsby's life and Fitzgerald's own life and although they both belonged to a humble background, they had success in life. Still that success led to their sad demise.

Social status affecting the dreams in *The Great Gatsby*

Besides Gatsby's love and romanticism for Daisy another important aspect present throughout the novel but often neglected is that of social stratification. *The Great Gatsby* is an excellent

exposition of the role and power of the social strata maintained strictly and followed in the 1920s. The novelist has taken great care to show the power dynamic between different groups existing in society, their problems and how they exist as a whole. There is a huge difference in the opportunities available to the elite class and to the lower classes. This also makes a great difference in their living conditions. The play is mostly a criticism for the upper elite classes which Fitzgerald had divided into two further groups. The terms he used for this classification were new and got much popular after this work. These divisions are the old money and the new money.

Old money is used to refer to those who live in the East Egg. These people like Tom and Daisy acquired wealth through inheritance. They did not work for it nor do they do business like Tom in the novel doesn't go to work but is always busy in leisure. He tries to flaunt his money whenever possible to show his high status. These old money people consider themselves as the top most class and superior to all others. They have follow customs and refined manners though they are hollow from inside and work in selfish interests not caring about anyone else. These people appear to be against social equality as they enjoy their superior status and think they can do whatever they want with the lower class people. Tom had affair with Myrtle Wilson but he didn't seem to care much when she died. Similarly, Daisy after hitting Myrtle with car doesn't even stop to look but keeps driving. Even later she doesn't care about the consequences of her action and lets Gatsby take the responsibility for her mistake. Even after the person who cared most about her i.e., Gatsby dies she just moves to another place with Tom.

New money is the term used for people living in West Egg. They got their wealth on their own rising in social class. Most of them supposedly got their new wealth through illegal business and not by inheritance. This is the reason they are looked down upon by the East Egg. Like in the

novel Tom shows contempt for Gatsby just because of his humble beginnings. They do not show the same sophistication as the East Egg people and don't follow a set of customs. These people have a lot of money and squander it on parties etc.

At last the category which is lowest is the poor people. These people live in the valley of ashes where dust and smoke from industries prevail. The living conditions are very bad here but these people are not able to leave and go to a better place because their poverty doesn't allow them to do so. These people's dreams have been crushed by the lack of money to even survive properly. Myrtle is a perfect example of someone living in this place who dreams to be rich someday and live a better life. This is the reason she gets involved in an affair with Tom Buchanan who just uses her and don't really care about her when she is dead. These poor people are also manipulated by the rich for their own benefit as Tom uses George Wilson to kill Gatsby because of his animosity with him.

Fallacy of American Dream proven by Gatsby's failure

We see even after getting rich and getting on par with Daisy's husband Gatsby is still not able to become worthy of her just because of his past as he was a janitor once and belonged to a poor family. This is in quite opposition to the American Dream ideal where anyone has opportunity for social mobility and are entitled to equality with others, to live with happiness and freedom to do what they want. Jay Gatsby the millionaire is reminded of his past as James Gatz and often disrespected by Daisy's husband Tom. He has this desire to be worthy of Daisy and so he tries to appear as sophisticated to her. He shows her his shirts, keeps a library of books etc. to show he is as refined as her. But still in eyes of Daisy, he is not as good as Tom and that's why she doesn't chose him over his husband. All his excess of material comforts are his endeavor to camouflage

his social poverty .His status of birth becomes something; he is not able to escape throughout his life. So in the novel poverty is something more than just about money. It also includes the social, ethical and psychological aspects as Gatsby has money still he is not able to be rich , still not able to fulfill his American Dream. This inescapable poverty in the novel threatens the notion of American Dream and the ideals of the nation as well. So poverty makes it difficult for readers to see Gatsby as a symbol of the hopes and dreams of America and its people. That is why it is said that the biggest gap between rich and poor was in the 1920s. So the poverty Gatsby was born into doesn't leave Gatsby's side even with changing times and ultimately it destroys him and his dream.

About the play Death of a Salesman

Arthur Miller wrote the Pulitzer winning play Death of a Salesman in 1948. It was produced in 1949. It only has two acts and also has a requiem. The play displays a man who is confused about his identity. He is unable to change with the changing times. We see many variations throughout the play from memories of the past to arguments of the present. The play is a tragedy where the protagonist Willy Loman keeps searching for the American Dream and unable to find a way, he ultimately kills himself. It also deals with the psychological condition of Willy due to his failure in a capitalist society and how his mental health gets worse due to neglect. The play has won several awards and there have been many film adaptations of it.

Willy was a person who wanted to be Salesman since he was young as he has heard stories of many successful salesman who were wealthy and popular. So he decides to become one such salesman like them and lives in an illusion of becoming or rather being a popular salesman. The play starts at a time when many years have passed of Willy trying to be successful salesman ,

know he has come to realize that he has been a failure at personal (not able to manage his family) and professional (barely surviving as salesman) level but still he is not ready to accept this reality. In his vision his sons are also a failure as they have also not been able to meet his criteria of being very popular among people. Willy instead of focusing on his present to make any better prefers to live in an illusion and remain lost in his memories of the past. He even imagines Ben giving him advice in the present (although he has died) to make himself feel better about the decisions he make. Towards the end of the play, Willy's older son Biff realizes that his father's ideals are wrong and makes fun of them in front of his father during a quarrel. Willy is affected by this, he probably gets some idea of reality and in the hope of leaving something for his sons to achieve their dreams, he commits suicide.

It has become one of those plays which have had most performances and was has been adapted many times. This is because the people were able to associate themselves with the story of Willy Loman who represents a common man. So not only American society but people from other parts of the world were able to resonate with his struggle to be successful. Struggling to achieve a happy and prosperous life and carrying the burden of responsibility of other family members is something which can be seen globally, this is the reason for such a reception of Miller's work by people around the world. Miller had also created his own new style which also helped in good understanding of the play by the readers. The play is such a tragedy which has an effect irrespective of the culture where it is performed.

When this play came out there was recession in America and Great Depression had ended just a few years ago. Seeing the economic situation of the country people were anxious as to they might have to face another depression. Though there is no direct reference to these events in the

play we still get some hints from things like Willy fired by his boss and struggling to pay his house loan etc.

The play's setting is during a time after the World War 2 and when the cold war was going on and so these things have an effect on the actions of the characters in this play. We have all heard about the importance of American Dream at this time and the benefit of a capitalist society but here we see the other side of the coin. The play shows us the pessimistic side of chasing the American Dream in a capitalist society.

Significance of the title: Death of a Salesman

The first idea we get from seeing a work and deciding that it is a literary work is through its title. This is why the author is especially concerned with deciding a proper title for his work. Many authors reject several titles before selecting one. This was also the case with Arthur Miller, who had first thought to name the this play as "The inside of his head" as he himself revealed. Miller in all likelihood thought of this as Willy remains lost in his imaginary world of fantasy most of the time during the play. To escape from the reality where he is unsuccessful, and his family is also struggling, Willy has created a fantasy world inside his head where everything is good, he is popular as a successful salesman. Death of a Salesman is an attempt by Arthur Miller to pour scour on the notion of American dream as it is not as perfect as it is claimed to be. Many people blindly follow it without properly understanding it's meaning first and get lost in their way of life. So the author wants people to also consider the negative aspects of this dream rather than believing whatever the society wants them to accept and follow.

Miller has used this title to express his condemnation towards the so praised ideal of American dream probably due to its corruption in the present time. The dream has become corrupted due to

the consumerism capitalist tendency of the society. He wants to explain to people as broadly as possible and at various levels why he is criticizing this notion which all people carry with them. We never get to know about the products Willy sells during the play or sold in his life just that they are not of much importance to people who will only purchase the essentials. Even if he wasn't able to sell many products, he sold an important part of himself as a salesman also has a dream of his own, and his true personality. Willy got so involved in his job that even after making no progress he would get ready everyday and go out to sell things making his wife Linda too believe sometimes that he was doing good at his job and all was going well.

It is highly possible that Miller changed the title as he had to emphasize the tragedy of a common man who struggles in a consumerist society. Adding the word death alarms the reader and prepares them for a tragedy that is going to take place at some point in the play. The word salesman is obviously used to refer to the protagonist Willy Loman and if we interpret the title literally, it is he who dies so the readers already have an idea of what is going to happen at the end of the play. When he changed the title the playwright might have thought of adding the word salesman to emphasize on the consumerism tendency of the society where people only cared about how much money a person has and if they can get any material benefits from him. That is personal worth was being defined on account of financial transactions. In such a society without values, we get to see the degradation of societal values and customs.

The title can also be interpreted as a death of the profession which is a "salesman". When Willy was young, he heard of a man named 'Dave Singleman' who was a great salesman. He was good at his work and was very popular which was evident from the fact that a large number of important people were present at his funeral and everywhere people were talking about his death when he died. He had also amassed great wealth during his career. So, during this time, being a

salesman was worth it. But when Willy became a salesman, the times had changed and being a salesman was not easy as people would only purchase items which they absolutely needed. This is the problem with Willy that he is not able to change himself with the changing times and keeps believing that one day he will be successful.

The death could also be interpreted in a metaphoric sense, which will be the death of the American dream of Willy, a salesman and also a common middle-class man. It is also the death of Willy's dream to be successful in life and provide for his family. At the end of the play, Willy has lost his small wage job and has no money saved for future. He kills himself in a final attempt to help his family and let Biff realize his dream which he probably thinks is to become a great salesman but we get to know after his death that Willy doesn't want to follow his footsteps. Also his death seems futile as everyone guessed that Willy's death was a suicide, so his family might not even get the insurance money.

Comparing Miller and the Lomans and their American Dream

Arthur Miller was a playwright who showed people that American Dream was just an unrealistic expectation which cannot be achieved. He was born in New York and it was in this city where his father had his business. This is the reason he has set the play in New York as he lived there since childhood and has accurately represented it during the 1940s. Their business went non-existent during the Great Depression. This was also one of the major causes of Willy's failure. Though Willy's father and brother who belonged to an earlier time were successful in their life but Willy isn't because he is trying to use his older family values for success which doesn't work anymore. Willy is unable to change with the changing times of Great Depression when life was difficult for everyone and being successful was not easy. But Willy keeps imagining about a time

when America was prosperous and imagines himself successful in that world. Miller struggled in life since he was young as there family was affected economically and he struggled through school. He changed various jobs but wasn't successful at any one of them. This is just like Biff in the play who keeps changing jobs where he receives a small pay at each one and is not satisfied.

After his first play was a failure, he started writing novels but soon came back to writing plays. Miller had used his own father's experiences who he saw as a failure as he failed to provide for his family. Similarly in the play, Willy fails to provide for his family as he struggles in a consumerist society run by capitalism. He sells products which no one wants to buy as those were the years when people were only buying what they absolutely needed as they were suffering too financially.

Miller has tried to show that during this time, it was not possible for everyone to achieve the American Dream and only few people like Charley and Bernard in the play were able to get successful in life. Willy at last takes his own life in a last attempt to help his family. Miller had made the tragic story of Willy such that every American can connect with it, with their own failures and the degradation of societal and human values in such a society. Miller is known for not writing to please the readers but for showing them a mirage image of themselves and their society.

It was never an easy journey for Miller even as a writer as his first play closed after just four performances. But instead of getting sad about the reviews or the audience, he tried to find the reason for the play's failure and soon returned after few years with good plays. Miller believed American Dream is just not a single person's belief but it affects everyone as he himself said that

if someone is a writer in America, he is definitely using the concept of American Dream in his work in one way or another.

Though tragedy is a story about the tragic fall of a hero of high birth. Miller is known for writing modern tragedies in which the subject is the common man and his struggles in life. His characters often deal with guilt of the past, the opposition to power and focus on responsibility at a personal and social level. He even believed theatre could “change the world” as he said himself and is also evident from his work.

Predominant theme of American Dream in the play

When we speak about the most important playwrights of the 20th century, Arthur Miller's name comes to the mind without any delay. He holds a high position in the drama of America as he was wrote undauntingly about whatever he wanted to convey to readers. He often focuses on the discord between a small group of people which comprise a larger society. His plays are more than often about a family and how this family of which the protagonist is a part of have to face the psychological impact of the problems in their life and due to constant worry about the welfare of the other family members. We can also see how this family is affected by the social rules or changing social behavior, this sometimes also leads to disintegration of the family as we see in *Death of a Salesman*. Willy is almost alienated by his family because he remains lost in his delusions and is unable to think properly as a result is unable to provide for his family. Linda understands that Willy is suffering on a psychological level and he might get more sick but she is not able to interfere because of fear of making things worse. Whereas his sons Biff and Happy don't even discuss his health and their own life with him. Miller is known for such a good portrayal of his characters as if they are not abstract characters at all but in fact are some people

in the real world whom he is describing. This is the genius of Miller and not only this but he also describes them with their troubles and how they are affected living in a society which seems as if it was not structured for survival of this character. They remain in a kind of strife with the social strata.

One of his such classical play for which he is most know for is Deah of a Salesman for which he won many awards. The story is about a middle-class old man struggling to leave his mark in the world because he is living under the illusion of the good old values which don't exist in the new society after Great Depression. The play is a tragedy and though a tragedy is supposed to show the downfall of a hero, here Miller has instead used a common man successfully proving that a common man can also be the subject of the tragedy. In Death of a Salesman, this common man is Willy Loman. He remains determined to pursue his American Dream throughout his life in a society which has corrupted it's real nature by materialism. After his elder brother Ben has left him alone and went to Alaska, Willy has created his own version of the American Dream to keep himself away from reality.

Willy is desperate to see his elder son to be successful and he wants him to be famous among his schoolmates and whoever he knows, this is Willy's formula for success. He is disheartened when Biff doesn't even go to school and is unable to keep up to his standard for success. Even his smaller son turns out to be a failure. This is what deeply affects Willy and he is unable to keep up with his modern day works or work normally in society. Willy is unable to get any sort of relief till he lives. So the tragic end of Willy Loman's life was not due to the failure of the concept of American Dream but due to his wrong ideals. Willy keeps contemplating why he isn't able to get success while his brother did so easily. He tries to imitate Ben who was a macho guy and was active in physical work as well. Willy believes he had been successful in achieving the

pinnacle of his dream but actually he is not popular at all and is unable to sell anything. It is only later when he realizes that his customers do not buy anything from him and he has failed as a salesman. He turns out to be a failure not just because he is unstable but because the society is too. The play shows how the definition and meaning of American dream keeps changing with times and people have to adapt to it.

Analyzing different characters in the play and their American Dream

Willy Loman's Character

Willy is the protagonist of the play *Death of a Salesman*. The story tells us all about him when we later realize it were the last two days of his life. Whatever all the other characters do it is in some way related to Willy. We see his character developing and his destiny formation with his interaction with these other characters. Willy always acts so antithetical and exhibits preoccupied behavior which is due to his confusion as to present and the past. When he is talking to someone, he also starts talking to someone from the past. In fact much part of the play is about Willy recollecting a memory and acting like it is actually happening presently. This illogical behavior of his becomes more prominent as the play progresses.

While Willy works for Howard Wagner, his boss in the sales business. Willy wants attention and to be appreciated but he doesn't get this from Howard. He also acts as a hindrance to Willy's supposed success when he first makes Willy work on commission and later just fires him. Willy very often talks and thinks about Ben, his elder brother who went into the jungles of Africa to search for diamonds. He was a success and made a lot of money in mining diamonds. Willy wants to be like him and also wants his sons to be as successful as Ben who became wealthy at a young age.

Willy had an affair during a sales trip to Boston and Biff who reached there following him had caught him. Prior to this incident, Biff had great respect for Willy and considered him as his ideal. Also till this time Willy was doing good professionally and getting success due to support of his family especially his sons. But after this incident Biff loses his faith in his father and thinks he is all about pretend and calls him fake. Soon after this Willy's relationships start deteriorating with his family and he also becomes a failure at his job. Though Willy wants to be like Dave Singleman, he himself starts considering himself as ordinary salesman and a failure. Willy remains lost in his fantasy world where he is doing great sales and is very popular. When at the end of the play too many of Willy's failures have piled up he decides suicide is the only way now. He also believes that this way, Biff will respect him again as he will leave insurance money for his sons. Before killing himself, Willy also thought that many people will come to his funeral but we see actually no one comes there.

Willy Loman's American Dream

Willy Loman thinks that a charismatic personality is enough to flourish in life and he believes this is what American Dream means. So, he doesn't focus on hard work and making or doing something new. He doesn't consider these as necessary part of the process which will lead to success. He just wants his boys to be popular and well-liked by others, he doesn't care if they are right or wrong. When Biff was a child and her teacher lisped in class, he made jokes about it and the other kids laughed. When Biff told about this to Willy, he instead of scolding his son, he supported him in his unwarranted act just because he made other kids laugh. So the only thing that matters for Willy is his sons should be popular no matter if they are right or wrong. Unlike a good parent who will first think about teaching some principles to his kids, Willy fails in his role

as a good father. This shows how different his outlook of the world is and the unrealistic expectations he keeps from his sons.

Obviously Biff is not successful in the future as he was taught wrong morals as a kid. He doesn't have a fixed job and keeps leaving jobs, he also doesn't have his own home. So, despite of being popular in high school, it was of no use to Biff as he just became a small worker at a ranch when he grew up. There is another incident in the play when the ideals of Willy fail. This is when he goes to his boss Howard to demand a raise in salary, he thinks he will get it because of his personality. He reminds Howard how he used to work for Howard's father and also named him as a kid. But Howard is unaffected by these recollections of Willy and instead fires him from the company.

Willy also has some good traits like he always keeps in his mind that he has to pay his homeowner's loan and constantly tries to be someone successful. But his mistake is that he becomes overconcerned with these things and fails to see what he already has. He has a good family which loves him and cares about him. Willy takes this for granted and doesn't reciprocate his family's love for him. He is most concerned with how he appears in a society and is obsessed with the thought that people should consider him popular and successful. His flaw is that he should have focused more on his family than on what society thinks of him.

Importance of Ben in Willy's life

Ben Loman is the older brother of Willy Loman. He doesn't actively participate in this play because he is already dead when the story has begun. He only exists in the play when Willy remembers him in past memories or sees a hallucination of him and takes advice from him. Ben didn't go to business like Willy but instead took a risk and first went to Alaska and then to the jungles of

Africa in search of an opportunity. He got lucky and earned a lot in diamond mining. Willy considers Ben's luck and his success in life as the only possible path which can lead to success. He often thinks about imitating Ben's methods to be successful and become rich quickly.

It is a great sorrow to Willy that he didn't go to Alaska with him else he would have been as successful as his brother. Willy believes that Ben is a knowledgeable person and aware about himself and always knows what to do. These are the qualities which Willy thinks are missing in him but were in his brother. That is why he always wants Ben's advice even after he is dead, Willy imagines Ben giving him advice which is of course just Willy's imagined advice to himself so it doesn't work for him.

As Willy is unable to maintain his professional life as well as his personal life, he asks the imaginary image of Ben about how their father used to manage these things so well. Sometimes even the readers get confused as if Willy's asking advice to Ben is one of his memory from their past or if just an hallucination seen by Willy. There is no surety if Ben Loman was really such a great person as Willy try to portray him. He also gives wrong advice to Willy's son Biff when they are practicing fighting , Ben cheats his way to win, when Biff is surprised , Ben suggests him to use such a technique as he can always win by it , that is by cheating. So, we have reason to believe that Ben was immoral and probably got success in Africa by some wrong means and not by hard work in an ethical way.

Ben's American Dream

Ben Loman represents the original idea of the American Dream which is anyone can rise from "rags to riches" in America as they have the opportunity to do so. It is almost like he started from nothing and made a fortune for himself. This is basic idea of American Dream most people

carry that America being a land of opportunity provides the chance to individual to rise from nothing and become successful and become wealthy. Ben got the most out of capitalism, he went to Africa and scoured the jungles in search of diamond mines. He earned a lot through trading diamonds.

Though it is not clear why the native people there would let him use their resources to get rich. So Ben probably used suspicious means to achieve his level of success. Linda, who is Willy's wife understands this to some level and isn't very excited when Ben makes a surprise visit to their home. She considers Ben reckless and also dangerous and so is worried when he comes to meet them. She is capable of understanding the true nature of a person and not just what they show on the outside. Her fear is not unwarranted as Ben cheats even to win a child game of fighting which show us his morals. He even points an umbrella at Biff's eye who is just a child. If he can do this to a child, what he would have done to get so rich. Willy often yearns for the success his brother got and it affects his male pride and he becomes less confident of himself. So the author has probably tried to send us the message that to achieve the American Dream not only hard work but a kind of recklessness is needed.

Happy Loman's character and his American Dream

Happy Loman is the younger son of Willy. He is a complete ladies' man. Happy is just another version of Willy. Unlike Biff, Happy had always listened to and accepted whatever Willy told him, his ideals of success are based on the model set by Willy. Just like his father he prefers to live in an illusion rather than accepting the reality of his life. He is content with overstating his position and value. He tells everyone that he is an assistant buyer while he is just an assistant to

the assistant buyer. He just represents Willy's attitude of living under the delusion that you are successful instead of accepting the reality.

Willy was a failure as a Salesman but considered himself a good and popular salesman whom everybody knew. Just like him, Happy also tricks himself into believing that he is doing good at his job and progressing in life when he actually isn't. Happy has affairs with women who are engaged to men who work in the business at Happy but at higher position than him. He prides himself on his sexual prowess and feels powerful having relations with his bosses' fiancées. His only reason for having affair with them is because he loathes these men as he had to take his orders from them. So, we can see the similarity between him and his father. While Willy had an affair while being married, Happy has many affairs before being married. Also both hyperbolize how successful and important they are.

Happy is someone who doesn't seem to ever learn from his failures and so he doesn't grow. He undergoes almost no change in his personality as he thinks he is doing perfect and lives in this illusion. He keeps changing jobs but is still satisfied with his life till he gets some money and can indulge in romantic relations with different women. He focuses on the material possessions to hide from his reality. He assumes that as long he is still earning even though a little , he can surely achieve at some point of time what he always aimed for which are cars, a house and to be with girls. He is just as aimless as his father Willy was as he doesn't even know what he is working for. He even admits it to his brother Biff -

“I don't know what the hell I'm workin' for”

This is when both Happy and Biff come to their parents' home for some time away from their jobs and apartments on rent.

Character of Biff Loman

Biff is the older son of Willy. Though he looks like a tough guy, he is actually a smart man who understands his situation and that of his family. Just like Willy and Happy he also has not achieved any success in life. There are many weaknesses in his character too, like he can't maintain a single job, he keeps changing jobs. He has also stolen one or other thing from most of his employers and even got arrested for this. Still he seems to be the only character in the play who wants to change himself for the better. He has this drive for personal development which makes him different from the other characters and to make the readers actually like him.

Willy always had great expectations from Biff since he was a kid. When Biff was in high school, he was very good at football, so he was very popular among kids. Since Biff did good as a kid, it was probably Willy whose parenting led to Biff being a failure when he became an adult. Willy was only concerned with Biff's popularity and didn't pay attention to other things like if Biff was even paying attention to his studies which he didn't. Biff missed several of his classes and failed in Mathematics when he was a senior. So, all of his efforts in football couldn't get him into a college with scholarship because he didn't have the appropriate credits.

Willy's failures really affected Biff's future. This can be seen from the fact that Biff didn't attend summer classes to make up for his grades just because he was upset with Willy. Just when Biff had to attend summer school, he found out about Willy's affair which really affected him. Willy was Biff's hero and ideal and he could never expect that his father would do such a thing. Biff realized the shallowness of Willy's big talks. He didn't attend the summer school and things really changed for him from here on. Biff tried to work but couldn't keep a job as he would steal from his boss who would then fire him. He also tried working at many ranches in the west

region. Now he is thirty four years old and he has realized that his father has a material definition of success and expectations from him that he will never be able to fulfill. He now understands how the Willy's methods of raising his kids were botched.

Biff Loman's American Dream

Biff is one of the complicated persons who occurs in a literary work particularly in this play. He is the one person from whom we can expect that he will fulfill his American Dream in course of time as he has the capability to do so. His dream is the right one and not an exaggeration or an illusion. The only thing which is a hindrance to achieving his dream is his conflict with his inner self. If that conflict could be sorted out, he would have no limitations.

Biff is just like Willy in one sense that he remains confused as to what dream he should follow. Willy wanted to be a successful businessman but he also wanted to be like Ben and his father and earn by doing physical work outside of the city. Biff thinks that he should probably follow his father in business, become a salesman or something like that and make his name in the capitalist version of the city life. Aside from these urban aspirations, when he listens to his inner self he gets the feeling to leave the city to work on a farm. Biff often fantasizes about working on a ranch, living a natural life. It is his passion to work outdoors and not just sit in an office whole day or go around selling things.

These are the things which he desires and which were also desired by Willy who had this natural sense of poetry and he also wanted to do work in open air. So, they both have this natural inclination which they don't embrace. It is only after Willy's death and at the end of the story that Biff gets the realization that he should listen to his inner calling. He can finally see that his father wasted his life chasing the wrong dream, living under delusion of a popular salesman

when he should have done some rustic work. There are many proofs in the play that Willy was strong enough and was good at physical labor as he has himself built their garage in the house. He also made efforts in giving their house a new ceiling.

So we can see how Willy was himself chasing the wrong dream and also send his elder son in the wrong direction instead of appreciating him for what he was good at. But sadly he couldn't understand this in the course of his life and went on selling different things for different people in which he had no interest in. This led to the decaying of his American Dream. After Willy's death, Biff who has remain confused most of his life and went down a spiral, now knows what to do. He will stop chasing his father's ideals for once and all. He will instead appreciate his love for natural life and go to the rustic part of the country to work on a countryside ranch. So Biff is the only character in this play who has learned something from his life and shows some actual self development.

American Dream of Loman's Neighbours

Charley

Charley is Willy's neighbor and acquaintance from old time. He thinks of Willy as his old friend and is always ready to help him. He gives Willy money whenever he needs it. Charley knows that Willy will not accept his financial help if he just donates the money to him. So he tells him that he is giving the money as a form of loan. When Willy's boss, Howard Wagner tells him that from now on he will only work from him on commission, Charley turns out to be a big help for Willy and supplies him with cash every week as much he needs. Seeing his condition Charley knows that Willy always exaggerates about his success and life. He knows it is getting difficult

for Willy to manage things. So he offers him a job many times. But Willy in his arrogance refuses to accept.

It often seems that Willy envies that Charley and his sons are doing well while no one in his family got any success and they are barely surviving. Willy fails to understand that Charley is helping him because of his good nature and not to flaunt his success. The difference is that Willy is delusional and brags about his success while Charley is actually successful but still remains humble. Even Willy gets surprised at the fact that Charley's son has become a lawyer at the supreme court still he doesn't boast it to anyone not even his neighbors. Charley is the measuring stick to which Willy always compares himself, his success and his family. Willy cannot measure up to Charley, so he always try to show himself that Charley and his son are not as good as Lomans in many ways. He doesn't even consider Charley manly as he doesn't take interest in football and for having a son who just studies all day.

So we can say that Willy is just covetous of Charley and his son's achievements and always in search of a reason to belittle him. He can't understand the reason for his neighbor's successful life and the good way he has raised his son. What infuriates Willy more is Charly is always ready to help him and is not arrogant at all. Willy is too egotistical too understand that Charley just wants to help and not show that he is superior. This behavior of Willy shows us that even listening to someone who is trying to help him will hurt his ego so he continues on his path to failure.

Charley is actually true example of someone who has achieved his American Dream by doing everything right. He is successful and has his own business even though he started small. The readers expect that the other characters will learn something from him.

Bernard

Bernard is Charley's son and lives in the house next to Willy's. He was a nice boy and followed what his father told him to do. He used to focus on his studies unlike Willy's son Biff who used to just play football and have pride in his popularity. Even though Biff and Willy called him a nerd and used to make fun of him, he would still help Biff pass in exams by showing him answers. He wasn't like someone who would only think of himself or take revenge on Biff, instead he wanted that Biff too would graduate with him. He was worried when Biff couldn't pass the Math exam. Bernard has a very little role in the play and mostly is seen in Willy's recollections of the past when he was a kid. Now he has grown up and become a successful lawyer so his hard work has come to fruition. So just like Willy and Charley have completely different personalities, Bernard and Biff are also just opposite.

Bernard too was just a kid and when he saw Biff's popularity and his loneliness and being pushed too the margins, he started to see Biff as ideal image under peer pressure. But it is Bernard's consistent hard work and persistence that he is able to become a lawyer at Supreme Court. When he talks to Willy, he asks about Biff but only because he is worried about him and not to show that he is superior. Though he has got such success in life, he doesn't go boasting about it as he is modest just like Charley.

Bernard is the best example in the play to demonstrate that it is possible as a matter of fact. He achieves his American Dream through following the right path which his father had taught him. He kept working hard since he was a child, studied seriously for his school even though his neighbors made fun of him and tempted him to leave his studies and be like Biff who was only interested in football. Good parenting by Charley played an important role in this success of

Bernard. This was unlike Willy who taught his kids they only need to focus on their personality and be popular in order to be successful.

American Dream Quotes from the play

A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. The curtain rises.

Before us is the Salesman's house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides. Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and forestage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange. (Miller 1)

This is how the play starts like any other play talking describing the first setting. Even in these very first lines we can see the presence of the idea of the American Dream of which hints are being given subtly. There are various details and there is talk about horizon and the ownership of a home. These are the basic elements of the American Dream. Since the very beginning of the American Dream, having one's own home as always been an important aspect. In some cases it is also seen as owning a piece of land for farming, building a house etc. These lines describe the house and it's and the state of the other surrounding buildings in its vicinity. The kind of description we see here gives the readers hints as to the story will further revolve around the house and so it will be an important aspect to consider. The house is a part of the Loman's family American Dream and it seems something is about to happen to it as can be perceived from the hints of menace in these opening lines.

[BIFF:] Sure, maybe we could buy a ranch. Raise cattle, use our muscles. Men built like we are should be working out in the open.

HAPPY, avidly: The Loman Brothers, eh? (Miller 12)

At this point Biff and Happy have grown up and are adults who work for a living. They both have different jobs and live in separate apartments at rent but have come to visit their parents in their old house. They are about to sleep in their bedroom in which they used to sleep as kids. They are unable to sleep so suddenly they both start talking and first they discuss the health of their father Willy.

Then they tell each other about their current status in life and the dream they want to accomplish. Biff tells happy about his dream of working at a ranch in the west side region of the country. This is his version of the American Dream. Happy probably jokingly suggests the idea that they will work together on the ranch as Loman brothers. It is often seen by the readers that here the scenario of western movies have been referred to. This shows us that Biff and Happy both have acquired a sense of confidence in the idea of American Dream, that it is a dream that can be fulfilled. In addition to this they both also exhibit another trait of Willy that is his habit of making unfeasible conjectures without proof.

What's the mystery? The man knew what he wanted and went out and got it!

Walked into a jungle, and comes out, at the age of twenty-one, and he's rich! The

world is an oyster, but you don't crack it open on a mattress! (Miller 28)

Here Willy is telling the story of his elder brother Ben to his son Happy. Ben had fulfilled his American Dream as he was just of the same status as Willy earlier but after he had to went to Africa he got awfully rich by dealing in diamonds there. Willy boasts of his brother's success to his sons and wants them to see Ben as their ideal. He was someone who took risks, going far away from his hometown and worked hard according to Willy. Ben was a authoritative man who

didn't wanted to take orders from anyone so he started his own business. Willy wants his sons to look up to him as a shining example of how to easily achieve the American Dream. Even though Willy is himself not able to achieve success, he remains optimistic with the idea that his brother achieved the American Dream so it is also possible for him and his sons to fulfill their dreams. It is the stories of Ben which keep Willy going, that is why he keeps imagining Ben and taking his advice whenever he is stuck at a problem and thinks he need guidance. Though it is his own advice to him so it obviously doesn't do him any good. We are even not sure if Ben really achieved success in his life or that too is something that Willy has imagined to make himself feel good.

Maybe it's all just his memories and fantasy world of Willy which he keeps talking about but whatever it is at least it keeps him going. He keeps working hard every day without stopping in order to be as successful as Ben.

Do you know? when he died - and by the way he died the death of a salesman, in his green velvet slippers in the smoker of the New York, New Haven and Hartford, going into Boston - when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. Things were sad on a lotta trains for months after

That (Miller 61)

Here Willy is talking to Howard Wagner, his boss about positioning him in New York and for a salary raise. Linda has asked Willy to request his boss for New York position and for an advance so that they can pay for insurance. When Willy enters Howard's office he is apprehensive of his

response as Howard will probably not agree with him. Howard is arrogant and looks down his nose on Willy and just replies coldly that there is no opening in New York and speaks to Willy using the word “kid” though Willy is much older than him.

In order to persuade him, Willy tries to make him remember how he used to work for Howard’s boss and also played a role in naming him as a kid. Willy also tells him his reason to become a salesman through a story about a man he met when he was young. He was inspired by this man named Dave Singleman who was a popular salesman. Willy liked his stories of travelling and fortune he earned being a successful salesman. Willy believed that Dave earned all of his fortune through being a salesman and so he made being a salesman his passion. He was astonished at how Dave Singleman even at the age of 84 was able to earn a lot just by calling his buyers to make sales without even leaving his room.

Willy talks about when Dave died so many people came to his funeral as he was very popular. He carries this ideal of Dave’s success in his mind throughout his life and sometimes consider himself as famous as him. He imagines that just like Dave, there will be many people at his funeral and he will be talked about everywhere.

All right, boy. I’m gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It’s the only dream to have—to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this where I’m gonna win it for him.

(Miller 111)

This is from the time that Willy has died by committing suicide. He had sacrificed himself in a last attempt to fulfill his family needs and so that the family members progress in life. These lines are spoken by Happy and directed at Biff when both the brothers are standing near their

father's grave. Happy is overwhelmed by Willy's death and is deeply affected by it, he wants to fulfill his father's dream. He repeats his father's ideology in order to strengthen it, to show himself and others that his father was right to some extent, that his death was not futile. He praises Willy's quality to fight for success even when the odds were against him. Happy has always listened to his father since he was a kid and still sees him as a valiant hero who sacrificed his life. Just like Willy he lived in delusion instead of accepting reality and he is still not able to get out of it even after Willy's death. We can assume that Happy will not be able to be successful even in future as he is still following Willy's ideals and considering him to be right.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Though many talk about American Dream as if it is just a wish of material success on social and economic level, one cannot deny that it something rousing and earnest in it which is much more than the comforts which any material possessions will provide. This will be accepted not just by an American but anyone around the world who knows about the American Dream. This is what this phrase was meant to be when it was first formed. Truslow who coined this phrase was deeply affected by the Great Depression and he almost believed that there were chances that authoritarian rule could have started at that time in America just like in Europe. He also talked about how money and material success had become most important and no one cared about values. Money is something which can provide but considering itself as a value was what was surprising about these years. For Truslow Adams this could never had been the definition of American Dream as he dreamed of a place where everyone would be treated equal and had the right to rise in social class, to achieve the highest stature in life.

American Dream was meant to be a dream of common welfare, for well-being of everyone in such a society where each person could be the best version of themselves. It was this dream that Dr. King talked about during the struggle for civil rights. He wanted Black Americans to be treated equally as the Whites. The idea of American system of beliefs was often heard of in all kinds of political statements with beliefs like liberty, opportunity and equality. Till early 20th century there were seldom any examples of men who had purchased large areas of land and built large mansions for themselves when they didn't even need so much space. This was seen as an act of inequality and not in accordance with the American values. So such people were criticized

for this, and during this time the dream was mostly about equality among people. The aspect of American Dream which talks about individual success and upward social mobility for and individual of a low class, these parts were added only after the second world war. And in present times, if a person has such a big mansion for himself or a large area of land belongs to him, it is seen as indicator that he has achieved his American Dream.

Now people are again fearing that amassing wealth is becoming too important to people nowadays and the increasing number of millionaires benefiting from capitalism and no one to criticize their actions could result in an end of the American Dream and also endanger the democracy ideals. This is not unlikely because it has happened before when rich people have overthrown those in power and taken the power for themselves.

James Truslow has also given the example of Library of Congress which could be seen as manifestation of American Dream where anyone could come to read. So the idea of an immigrant coming to America and having chances of success or a man who went from rags to riches due to opportunities has come much later. The example given by Truslow is how the nation was meant to prosper and not through those individuals who does prejudice at political level or does not act in collective welfare. So that is the true meaning of the American Dream whose early propagators urged people sympathetically to be against bias and to strive for equality among each other and to prosper collectively. It is a dream for a democracy for the people where government is just for everyone and power also lies with the people.

In *The Great Gatsby*, the American Dream in addition to being an important theme is also a part of the narrative. During this time, a person's success was being measured by their level of financial success which further decided how happy they would be. During the 1920s people

believed their self worth could only be defined by their material possessions just like Gatsby thinks that to be worthy of Gatsby he needs to be very rich , live in a big mansions , showcase her shirt collection to Daisy etc. Fitzgerald has criticized the unrestrained pursuit of wealth through the characters of Gatsby and Myrtle in their view of their American Dream. Myrtle's role is particularly used to show the consumerist tendency of the dream during the time formed due to the significantly increased advertising in the 1920s. Through the characters of Gatsby and Myrtle we see that how the American Dream which is supposed to be a pursuit of the highest stature for oneself where one can be his best is turned into an additional pursuit of wealth. Gatsby's accumulates all his wealth to rise in status. Similarly Myrtle hopes to marry Tom and wants to be perceived as sophisticated and of a high social class which she hopes to pursue through owning expensive things. In her home George Wilson works hard in garage to provide them with food , while she has parties with Tom and expresses her wish to buy a dog collar which would be a waste of money in her case.

Fitzgerald has also tried to criticize the behavior of the wealthy elite class, how they a kind of safety net on a social level as well as on a financial level which protects them even when they do something wrong. Even though it was Daisy who hit Myrtle while driving, she didn't have to suffer any consequences for murder and she just went back to living her life, maintaining her perfect reputation when Gatsby had to give up his life for her mistakes. This also shows how materialistic and unemotional Daisy was as she didn't even care for Gatsby even when he gave up his life for her. This is in sharp contrast to the image of ideal Daisy which Gatsby had been carrying throughout his life.

Over the years duplexity of the American Dream has developed. Originally meant to be a dream of achieving high social order and one's best self, it also seems to have incorporated the meaning

of individual financial success. Many other expectations are also being attached to the phrase making it unrealistic and corrupted. In *The Great Gatsby* we see such corrupted versions of the American Dream through characters of Gatsby and Myrtle. Gatsby is too idealistic, and hopeful which actually is a laudable quality but plays out to be a blunder in Gatsby's case as he was using these unrealistic expectations as an escape from reality. He had created a perfect image of Daisy over the years and even when he realized that the real Daisy was not even close to his ideal image, he still didn't stop loving her as it was the only important thing remaining in his life. So Gatsby's mistake was that he was too drawn in on the emotional aspect of the dream whereas he existed in a world where people only valued material possessions and social status. Gatsby in his naivety has formed his irrational desire for rewriting his past which eventually led to his demise.

Gatsby himself could be considered as representative of the corrupted American Dream as he took to delinquency because he wanted to be a part of the upper class by any means. Also, the accumulation of wealth was in direct contrast to the original dream of keeping happiness of an individual as top priority rather than material things. This belief of racking up wealth was gaining prominence among the consumerist society of the 1920s which made the American Dream during this time sound like a hypocrisy. Despite these faults Gatsby is still the hero in the novel because of his love for Daisy which was pure. Whatever he did was in view of his romantic ideals and this is the reason Nick considers him a better person than all the East Egg people like Tom and Daisy.

Death of a Salesman is a postmodern work dealing with the ideologies existing in a consumer society. Though the play is often seen as an attack on the ideal of American Dream but instead it is an attempt to revive the American Dream to its former state before it became a dream for

personal financial development. The play could be said to be inspired by Miller's own experiences as his father had a business which ended during the Great Depression and afterwards his father was never able to rise economically and socially. His father failed in his role as the provider just like Willy is not able to give his sons a proper future in the play. The play shows us with the changing times of past till present and with the change of the century, the American Dream has also changed. Willy had seen his father and elder brother going out in the world and getting successful and he also saw the time of 1920s when there was economic boom. This is the reason for Willy's strong belief in American Dream and he chose the path of being a salesman in order to be successful and amass fortune like Dave Singleman , a great salesman he had heard of. First of all, Willy was following the wrong method to do his sales which was outdated and secondly even if he did it right, it was his bad luck that he had to go selling items during the time of Great Depression when everyone was struggling with money. So, until someone was selling something really useful, they wouldn't purchase it. Willy was unable to understand that it was not possible for everyone to achieve their American Dream during this time and he kept blaming himself and seeing himself as a failure.

He started imagining himself as a popular salesman who is doing good in life when actually he and his sons were just garden variety who didn't achieve much during their lives. This shows that people in the beginning of the millennium got successful and became big men by virtue of their success and wealth but people in Willy's time have made themselves small on a spiritual level as well as intellectual level. Willy keeps trying for success but fails whereas Charley and his family are successful. The difference is due to their attitudes, while Willy's neighbors had got success by the sweat of their brow, Willy relied on his personality and popularity to be successful and even told this formula to his sons and made them a failure as well.

Miller had made this play a criticism of American society showing the readers how the America has changed and with it the values have also changed. Miller is surprised at the fact that in a nation which is deemed so great, people are doomed to failure as they get lost in the wrong values. It is possible that the nation was great earlier but due to the changed values and corruption of the dream, its lustre is no longer the same. Willy worked for Wagner's company all his life and managed to feed his family by constantly working. He thought one day he will be rewarded for his loyalty to the company that will at least help in his retirement. He is surprised when Wagner's son Howard doesn't even care about the fact that Willy has worked for his father for so many years and that he named him as a kid. Willy is not able to accept the fact that the world has changed and people no longer care about sentimental values, they have become so materialistic as if they don't have any feelings. Willy is not making any contribution to Howard's business hence he doesn't care about him and disrespects him. He even fires him when Willy asks for a raise and his preferred positioning. Willy doesn't understand that the only value left among the people is "profit" that is all they see. This naivety of Willy in the capitalist world that he lives in is what dooms him towards failure.

Another thing that represents the corruption of the American Dream in the play is the selfishness in the people during the society of the time. Every person only cared about himself and only saw the others as competition. Each person was trying to not just be successful but to be better than others. Competition among each other did not benefit anybody as a person doesn't want others he knew to be successful and this competition ultimately ruined the society and its values. The dream could be more real and achievable only if people could become more compassionate and willing to help others. They should think of it as progressing together rather than just looking

forward to individual success. It is because of these shortcomings of the society that Miller has focused on the negative components of American Dream.

We see through the character of Willy Loman if someone becomes too preoccupied with achieving the dream, it can lead them to desperation and it might just have dangerous results. Willy in his delusion of the dream led himself and his family to failure and it eventually led to his death. He had the wrong idea to be successful through just personality and not by working hard but just by personality. So, it is not possible for everyone to achieve their American Dream, particularly when they are not doing it right.

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