The Promise and Failure of the American Dream in Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction

Parvin Ghasemi, Mitra Tiur

Abstract

The Great Gatsby is Fitzgerald's best fictional account of the promise and failure of the American dream because here the congruity of story and style and attitude is most meaningful to the depiction of this theme. Fitzgerald created Gatsby and his myth to be an emblem of the irony and the corruption of the American dream. Fitzgerald was the embodiment of the fluid polarities of American experience: success and failure, illusion and disillusion, dream and nightmare. The exhaustion of the frontier and the rebound of the post war expatriate movement marked for Fitzgerald as the end of a long period in human history, the history of the Post-Renaissance man in America, that he made the substance of his works.

Fitzgerald's ideology, a serious criticism on the American Dream, reveals the real nature of American life so that he could find a way to the truth of the American identity.

Keywords

American Dream, corruption, success and failure, illusion and disillusion, Jazz Age, ideology, criticism, American identity.

Full Text:

PDF

References

Burnam, T. (1952). The eyes of Dr. Eckleburg: A re-examination of the great gatsby. College English, 14, 7-12. [CrossRef]
______. (1922). Beautiful and damned. New York: Scribner's
______. (1934). Tender is the night. New York: Scribner's.
James, P. (2005). History and masculinity in F. Scott Fitzgerald's This side of paradise. Modern Fiction Studies, 51, 1-33. [CrossRef]
Will, B. (2005). The great Gatsby and the obscene word. College Literature, 32, 125-146. [CrossRef]
Why is the American Dream so important to The Great Gatsby? We analyze the role this key theme plays in the novel, using quotes, plot, and characters. Through Gatsby's life, as well as that of the Wilsons', Fitzgerald critiques the idea that America is a meritocracy where anyone can rise to the top with enough hard work. We will explore how this theme plays out in the plot, briefly analyze some key quotes about it, as well as do some character analysis and broader analysis of topics surrounding the American Dream in The Great Gatsby.

Roadmap. What is the American Dream? Critics of Scott Fitzgerald lend to agree that The Great Gatsby is somehow a commentary on that elusive phrase, the American dream. The assumption seems to be that Fitzgerald approved. On the contrary, it can be shown that The Great Gatsby offers some of the severest and closest criticism of the American dream that our literature affords. Historically, the American dream is anti-Calvinistic, and believes in the goodness of nature and man. It is accordingly a product of the frontier and the West rather than of the Puritan Tradition. The simultaneous operation of two such attitudes in American life created a tension out of which much of our greatest art has sprung.