

Idealism and Jay Gatsby  
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*The Great Gatsby* is a novel about the passions of the idealistic Jay Gatsby. His view of the world maintains that anything is possible. He centers his lifestyle around this philosophy and sets his ambitions on idealistic goals. He does not consider that many of his aspirations are far-fetched, possibly unachievable. Nonetheless, he has the power to put his ideals to the test and he finds out their real worth.

Gatsby's greatest ambition is to create a new life for himself and to dissolve his humble beginnings into oblivion. He wishes to disown his common family and become a rich businessman with a rich ancestry. The first step in doing this is to deny his birth by changing his name from James Gatz, the name his parents gave him, to Jay Gatsby, a much more romantic sounding name. He then begins surround himself with wealth. When he meets Dan Cody, he works himself up into a position of great notability and enjoys Cody's wealth. Gatsby is no longer a roaming clam-digger or salmon-fisher, but a man in business. Through this change in location he believes he has changed his whole history. However, when Cody dies, Gatsby is again left with nothing. It is not until after World War I that Gatsby achieves something. As an officer in the military, he is allowed to attend the prestigious Oxford University in England. This affluent lifestyle is perfectly suited to Gatsby's ideal. After leaving Oxford, Gatsby is again left with nothing, but then he meets Wolfsheim. Wolfsheim is a "gambler;" he is obviously involved in some obscure business. Gatsby gets into the same business and for the first time he makes the money he has dreamed of all his life. With this new wealth and appropriate lifestyle, Gatsby creates a new past to match. He invents an autobiography in which he was born

to very wealthy parents, graduated from Oxford, and was a hero in the war. The idealistic notion that he can make himself something that he is not nearly works.

With a new existence, and a background suited to his tastes, Gatsby also wants to relive parts of the past to make his ideal a reality. Many years ago, Gatsby had met the beautiful Daisy Fay with whom he fell in love. She could not love him, though, because he was not of the same social class as she. If they were to marry, he would have to be a wealthy aristocrat. So, their relationship ended as Gatsby went overseas to the First World War. After returning from the war and making his millions, Gatsby wants another chance with Daisy. He believes he is now worthy of her because of his material possessions. He wants to revive the love they had many years ago. When his friend Nick says to Gatsby that he cannot repeat the past, Gatsby retorts with, "Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can!" This firm ideal is the basis for Gatsby's way of living. He works to make himself look well off so that Daisy will love him. His idealism gives him the impression that money can buy love. In reality, this does turn out to be true.

One place that Gatsby's idealism fails him is in his vision of a perfect relationship. He envisions that life would be perfect if Daisy were to love him. His ideal woman would be true to him if only he could prove worthy of her. He does not consider the reality of Daisy's marriage or how her husband will feel about the affair. Nor does he consider that Daisy may have trouble hiding her love. Another kink in the relationship is that Gatsby does not have the ideal background he has invented. He has no wealthy family background or Oxford education. The source of his wealth is through dishonest means, associated with gambling, bootlegging, and racketeering. This illicit trade debases his utopian outlook. Daisy's marriage first gets in the way of Gatsby's perfect

happiness and this indirectly leads to his violent death. Because of his criminal friends and his illegal connections, he is without mourners at his funeral. His partners all leave Gatsby and foreot about him when he can no longer work for them. This was not the ideal vision that Gatsby had lived for.

Jay Gatsby of *The Great Gatsby* is an idealist. This holds with the beliefs of the author, F. Scott Fitzgerald who also held idealistic notions. Jay Gatsby believes that he can change his own life and the world. He is confident that he holds much more power than the average human is willing to assume. He tries to use this power to create a perfect life, which he fantasizes about in his great mansion. He has many idealistic notions, some that become reality and some that do not.