

The American Dream In the Great Gatsby

4 pages | 942 words

When I was about eight years old, I wanted to be a celebrity singer. In reality, I was an awful singer. But at the time I was infatuated by the idea of the spotlight and the success that intertwines with it. The American Dream and its promise of a better life entrances people of all ages. People all across the country work towards money, fame, love and ultimately happiness. But what if the American Dream is nothing more than simply that- a dream? Jay Gatsby from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* finds himself engrossed with the idea of once again winning the affection of his former lover, Daisy. Norma Desmond from *Sunset Boulevard*, a 50 year old former starlet striving to be 20 again, writes a script that she believes will jumpstart her return to the screen and all her adoring fans. Nothing, other than their biggest desire, will make either of them feel complete. However, it is slowly revealed that their one wish is unattainable. Gatsby discovers that Daisy cannot hold up to the weight of his imagined version of her and that she does not love him in the same, unrelenting way that he loves her. Norma finds that Hollywood has moved on and has already forgotten her legacy. Both characters feel they let their chance of happiness slip through their fingers, and are now grasping at nothing to bring back the past. The American Dream is impossible to achieve, yet Jay Gatsby and Norma Desmond convince themselves otherwise- only to fail miserably. It was not that they did not give enough effort, but rather they were doomed from the start, striving towards a dream that was never accessible in the first place. The unfortunate endings of Jay Gatsby's death and the insanity of Norma Desmond show us that the American Dream is unattainable and nothing more than an intangible mirage. For years, Gatsby dedicated his life to repeating the past and fulfilling his dream of earning Daisy's love again. There was no line Gatsby wasn't willing to cross in order to win over Daisy, a fact that becomes clear once Nick discovered his criminal activity in order to acquire his immense wealth. In Gatsby's eyes, the chemistry he once shared with Daisy could be rekindled- but this time he would have enough money to keep her happy. Gatsby was much like a spider as he weaved a careful web of stories and likely orchestrated many 'chance' events and encounters in order to lure Daisy, his prized fly, towards him. The endless parties and the open invitation were all planned with hopes her attendance. The first time we meet Gatsby we see him stretching his arms out across the water toward a green light that hangs by Daisy's house. This action of reaching towards something that cannot be reached is the perfect symbol for Gatsby's impossible objective, his American Dream. This green light is what gives Gatsby purpose in life, but this purpose eventually becomes an obsession. Gatsby puts Daisy up on a pedestal and she eventually becomes a goddess-like being to him. Imagined qualities of her...

American Dream Gatsby Essay

Jackson R. Bryer



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Table of Contents American Dream Gatsby Essay

1. Understanding the eBook American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - The Rise of Digital Reading American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - User-Friendly Interface

4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - American Dream Gatsby Essay User Reviews and Ratings
 - American Dream Gatsby Essay and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing American Dream Gatsby Essay Free and Paid eBooks
 - American Dream Gatsby Essay Public Domain eBooks
 - American Dream Gatsby Essay eBook Subscription Services
 - American Dream Gatsby Essay Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating American Dream Gatsby Essay eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - American Dream Gatsby Essay Compatibility with Devices
 - American Dream Gatsby Essay Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Interactive Elements American Dream Gatsby Essay
8. Staying Engaged with American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers American Dream Gatsby Essay
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection American Dream Gatsby Essay
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Setting Reading Goals American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time

12. Sourcing Reliable Information of American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of American Dream Gatsby Essay
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements
 - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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