
Vibrant, deadly, deceiving, innocent - colors are the dominating symbols utilized by F. Scott Fitzgerald in his masterpiece The Great Gatsby. Daniel J. Schneider, the Chairman of the Department of English for Windham College, states, “The vitality and beauty of F. Scott Fitzgerald's writing are perhaps nowhere more strikingly exhibited than in his handling of the color symbols in The Great Gatsby.” Throughout the book characters, places, and objects are given "life" by colors, especially the more prominent ones. The colors of white, yellow, and green are the most eminent, easily distinguishable from the rest, and representing purity, death, and hope. Such strong symbolic colors are seen continually, and exist to provide a higher and more in depth meaning to the book.

"White is one of the main symbolic colors in The Great Gatsby, representing purity, innocence, and honesty" (Adam H.). Nick Carraway, Jay Gatsby, Jordan Baker, and Daisy Buchanan all directly exemplify Adam's statement. Nick considers himself the only truly honest person he knows (Fitzgerald 60) and often wears white, such as when he attends one of Gatsby's parties for the first time. This event being considerably significant, Nick wanted to make the best impression he could - that is, appearing untainted and honest - for Gatsby and the other guests. Gatsby also adorns himself in white when he finally reunites with Daisy after five years of separation. "and Gatsby, in a white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie, hurried in" (Fitzgerald 84). Obviously this meeting was astronomically important to Gatsby, and he chose to wear a white flannel suit for a reason - to appear pure, innocent, and honest in order to appease Daisy, and gain back their lost love. Jordan Baker and Daisy Buchanan are two other characters that accurately portray the color white's symbolic meaning. Fitzgerald introduces Daisy and Jordan for the first time in white dresses simply sitting on a couch. Nick seems to be mesmerized by the sight of them as he says, "I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her [Jordan] by coming in" (Fitzgerald 8). Clearly the women seemed extremely pure and delicate to Nick if he were to desire apologizing for merely walking into a room causing a "disturbance." Furthermore, Nick is a very judging individual, and his attraction to both Daisy and Jordan indicates that he regards them as respectable individuals meaning pure, innocent, and honest. But it is known that Jordan, Daisy, and even Gatsby are certainly not truthful people.

The innocence illustrated by the color white is deceiving; it hides the corruption behind it (sciaga.pl). Jordan, Daisy, and Gatsby are all corrupted individuals. Jordan cheats in golf tournaments, and Daisy cheats on Tom and kills Myrtle Wilson without stopping the car. As Gatsby explains, "I tried to make her stop, but she couldn't, so I pulled on the emergency brake" (Fitzgerald 145). Gatsby is also a corrupted individual, gaining his wealth illegally and allowing his and Daisy's affair to take place. But if white covers up these immoral acts, then which color actually represents them?

Yellow is the color of depravity, like an infection upon the world of The Great Gatsby. This disease even infects the land, such as George Wilson's home in the Valley of Ashes. His house is made of yellow brick (Fitzgerald 24) and is essentially the only place that is strictly referred to as yellow. The house contains tainted individuals; both Myrtle and George. Mr. Wilson eventually decides to kill Gatsby on the basis of false information inside of that home, and displays more depravity when he tells Michaelis that "God sees everything" referring to the billboard of T.J. Eckleburg outside of his window, and Michaelis replies, "That's an advertisement" (Fitzgerald 160). George Wilson truly believes that the billboard is some kind of God who sees all of the immorality around him. Mrs. Wilson cheats on her husband, and even admits to regretting their marriage to begin with, saying, "The only crazy I was was when I married him" (Fitzgerald 30). Each person who lives in the yellow brick house is corrupted and immoral. The billboard of T.J. Eckleburg is related to the Wilson's home, as George views the billboard as a God. Not
surprisingly, T.J. Eckleburg is wearing yellow glasses, representing the depravity of Eckleburg's "godliness." Corruption is distinctly represented by yellow, but death is also a key to yellow's dark symbolism.

While regaining his composure from losing his wife to Gatsby's car, George Wilson continually refers to the vehicle as "the yellow car" (Fitzgerald 157) over and over until the image of the yellow automobile convinces him to kill the owner, Jay Gatsby. Myrtle Wilson was killed by Gatsby's yellow Rolls Royce in front of her yellow brick house under the yellow glasses of T.J. Eckleburg. It is completely apparent that yellow is related to death judging by the presence of the color during Myrtle's death, and also Gatsby's. Before Jay Gatsby was gunned down by Mr. Wilson, Nick observed Gatsby walking through yellowing trees just moments before his untimely death (Fitzgerald 161). Again, yellow is present during a very tragic death.

Yet for all of this negative symbolism, there comes the vibrant and mysterious color of green, seen mostly in the beginning and end of the novel. Gatsby is really one of the only characters who is directly connected with the color green. Nick encounters Gatsby standing in Gatsby's lawn in the dead of night, and describes what he sees: he stretched out his arms towards the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him I could have sworn he was trembling involuntarily I glanced seaward - and distinguishing nothing except a single green light, minute and faraway, that might have been the end of a dock. (Fitzgerald 22)

As Linda Pelzer states, "The green light forces Gatsby to hope and long for Daisy." Jay Gatsby is essentially spellbound by Daisy's green light, and is immersed in a world of dreams and hopes of returning to their past relationship that he was so obsessed with. Based on the excerpt from the novel itself and Linda's statement, the color green undoubtedly represents hope. Nick hints at it when he wonders what the old Dutch sailors coming to America thought when they laid eyes upon "the fresh, green breast of the New World" (Fitzgerald 182) and how it held such seductive hopes and promises for them (sciaga.pl). Fitzgerald deliberately inserted this thought of Nick's into the novel in order to further hint at the mysterious symbolism of the color green, and its significance to Gatsby. Nick then goes on to state that "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us" (Fitzgerald 182) meaning that Gatsby was hoping to restore his ancient relationship with Daisy that has long been an impossibility, though Gatsby failed to realize it because he was blinded by the hope generated by the green light. The color green betrayed Gatsby, insinuating that hope is not always reality.

The Great Gatsby is a novel containing three principal colors - white, yellow, and green - that are powerfully exercised to represent various aspects of personality and life. The innocence of the characters, symbolized by the color white, masks their corruption. The corruption is in turn illustrated by the color yellow. Yet, through all of this madness, deception, and bleakness the color green shines brightly above the others, signifying hope in the harsh and desolate world of The Great Gatsby. F. Scott Fitzgerald brilliantly linked each color symbol to the other, using them to build and mold a novel that can be understood by simply analyzing its colors. Fitzgerald hoped for a great book; perhaps this is why the cover was originally green.