

American Dream in Jay Gatsby as the Main Character of *The Great Gatsby* Novel

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Abstract

Most Americans have dreams for making their life better in the future. The dream can be called American Dream. It exists in all aspects of Americans' life, for example a novel. One of the novels that discusses American Dream is *The Great Gatsby* novel. I write this paper themed American Dream is because I want to analyze the concept of American Dream, the characteristics of it at each character, and the way the main character gets his dream. The method of collecting data that is used in making this paper is the method of descriptive qualitative. Then, the method of approach is sociohistorical method. The theory that is used in making this paper is psychoanalysis theory. In analyzing the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*, I found the concept of American Dream that has been existed since 1931 by Adams in his book entitled *The Epic of America*. Then, the characteristics of American Dream at each character are different from others. The final result is the way the main character trying to get his dream that is not easy to do.

Keywords: American dream, *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby, descriptive qualitative method, sociohistorical, psychoanalysis theory

I. Introduction

The Great Gatsby is a tragic love story written by F. Scott Fitzgerald, a novel author from America. This novel was published in 1925. The background of this novel is in New York and Long Island during the summer in 1922. This novel tells about a man named Jay Gatsby who wants to be a successful person and wants to get his lovely woman named Daisy Buchanan. In this novel, the main character has a dream to become a successful person in America that is known as American Dream.

The reason why this research is made is to analyze the American Dream in Jay Gatsby, the main character of *The Great Gatsby*. This novel has been very famous with the American Dream of Jay Gatsby so this research is done for analyzing the American Dream in Jay Gatsby. The reason why this research is given the title "American Dream

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in Jay Gatsby as The Main Character of *The Great Gatsby*” novel is because the main character in the novel has shown us the most struggle of getting something. The main character is the only character that has shown us of getting prosperity in life.

Besides that, I am interested in analyzing the American Dream in Jay Gatsby character because I want to analyze the concept of American Dream, the characteristics of American Dream at each character, and the way the main character gets his American Dream. The phenomenon that makes I interested in this research is there are many people in this world want to get something without having effort. After knowing the American Dream in Jay Gatsby, there is hope that the readers can be motivated to have effort to get what they want.

There are three research questions in this paper. The first is show the concept of American Dream. The next question is how the characteristics of American Dream at each of characters in *The Great Gatsby* novel. The final question is how the main character, Jay Gatsby gets the American Dream.

There are five studies related to the theme of this paper. Churchwell, in his writing titled “The Great Gatsby and the American Dream” (2012) explains about the first appearance of American dream. In the first appearance of American Dream, the American Dream is used for describing a failure. The second study entitled “Gatsby Teaches Us The Illusion of An “American Dream”” by Kettinger, 2015 discusses about depiction of Gatsby figure regarding the American Dream. The next study that have been found titled “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby, and Ernest Hemingway’s The Sun also Rises” by Poulter, 2017 discusses the differences about the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun also Rises* novel. Hence, the other study is titled “The American Dream in *Great Gatsby*” that is written by Wulick, 2016. This study discusses American Dream definition, Key American Dream quotes, and analyzing each characters via American Dream. The final study is titled “The American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* by F. S. Fitzgerald’s” written by Lucic, 2014 from International Journal of Languages and Literatures. This study discusses *The Great Gatsby* and the “jazz age”, the modernity of *The Great Gatsby*, and the American Dream is the basis of *The Great Gatsby*.

There are gaps or differences between my study and the five previous studies. There are four things that will be explained in this paper. In my study, there are the concept of American Dream, the characteristics of American Dream on each characters in *The Great Gatsby* novel, and the way Jay Gatsby as the main character gets the American Dream.

The theory applied in this paper is the theory of psychoanalysis that was initiated by Sigmund Freud. The idea of psychoanalysis is based on the condition of humans' psychology. According to him, the humans' mind is determined by irrational power which is not realized by biology encouragement factors and certain psychosexual encouragement in the first six years of the humans' life. This idea shows that the type of Freud's theory about humans' personality is deterministic.

There are three components of psychoanalysis. The components are id, ego, and superego. Id is a component of psychoanalysis that manages the humans' biological factors. Ego is a component of psychoanalysis that organizes the humans' psychological factors. While, superego manages the humans' social interaction.

In this paper, the psychoanalysis theory is used to explain the psychology of Jay Gatsby character toward getting American Dream. The psychoanalysis components of getting American Dream that had been done by Jay Gatsby are ego and superego.

II. Research Method

There are two research methods. The research methods are method of approach and method of getting data that are used in making this paper. The method of approach that is used in this paper is sociohistorical approach. Sociohistorical approach is a method that is seen in the social relationship and also the historical. The reason why this method is used in making this paper is because this research contains American Dream that has a history. American Dream has been existed since 1931 by James Truslow Adams in his book entitled *The Epic of America*. Besides that, the literary review itself is a description of human life society.

The method of getting data is descriptive qualitative methods. Qualitative method is a method of research that is descriptive and tends to use analysis. Qualitative

method uses analysis, examination, and interpretation of problem's observation to identify the theme, meaning, and patterns. This method uses case studies, analysis of written documents, and the interview. I read some books and articles to analyze the novel. The data that I got are from *The Great Gatsby* novel as the main data source of this research and an article in some journal that are relevant with the object.

III. Result and Discussion

America is a country which has a big influence in the world because this country is very prosperous. In many fields, such as economics, politics, social, and science, America is more superior than any other country in this world. Eventhough, this country is always called as "The Superior Country". All of the prosperous can be got because of many factors, for example the development of the American's community personally and the geographical condition.

There are many people who came from many countries to live in America. Because of that, America has many cultures from the people who came to America and brought their own culture. Sometimes, they built some communities that can be consisted of the people who are in the same or different region. It can be seen that there are many cultures that mix in America that makes the existence of America becoming bigger. The people who came from other countries also can make America becoming more prosperous that can make the other people from other countries living in America to get a better future.

Then, with the existence of multicultural in America that is supported by the geographical condition, all of the aspects in America develop fast from the time to time to become a country that can make every people's dream becoming true. It is because America is the centre of many things in the world so there are many jobs that can be applied by the people in America or other countries. The people from other countries come to America as immigrants and they have a hope to be success and to get a better future in America. They have the dream to be success for their prosperity in their future. This dream becomes a thing that can attract America people to have the same dream. So

that, this dream becomes one of the principle of America people to have a dream that is known as American Dream.

American Dream is a concept that has been existed since 1931 in the novel of James Truslow entitled *The Epic of America*. American Dream in his book is a right of every people to get their dream and to have happiness with using their skills and abilities to get a job. In brief, American Dream is a hope to make the people's lives being more prosperous. This concept has played a role in daily lives of Americans because Americans want to be rich and prosperous.

American Dream is not guaranteed, but the concept of American Dream can make the Americans break the obstacle and have spirit to reach American Dream. With reaching the American Dream, all people can get their properous with their own skill, but they also can get a punishment from their failure. The people who get their prosperity through American Dream will get the some positive things from their society, but the people who do not get their prosperity will get the negatif influence that can make them being suffered. American Dream is not guaranteed, while the concept of American Dream is emphasized on an optimism to the American to get the better future and the happiness. As a result of reaching American Dream, there are many succeed people get their goals because of hard working, but the others may get the failure although they have done their bet to get what they want.

There are found several characteritics of American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*at each characters, such as seeking the happiness, persistence, the way to get American Dream, individualistic, and also self-reliancein the analyzing of American Dream in Jay Gatby as the main character of *The Great Gatsby*.

A. Seeking Happiness

There are many factors that can prevent someone to reach their dream. One of them, there are many people who deny the right of fulfilling their potential in "seeking the happiness". Seeking the happiness in *The Great Gatsby* novel can be seen in the character of Tom Buchanan and Daisy Buchanan who had married, even they had a

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child. However, Daisy did not love Tom as her husband. She loved Gatsby and had a relationship with him. It can be seen in the quotation below :

“Under the dripping bare lilac-trees a large open car was coming up the drive. It stopped. Daisy’s face, tipped sideways beneath a three-cornered lavender hat, looked out at me with a bright ecstatic smile“ Are you in love with me , “ she said low in my ear,” or why did I have to come alone ?” (p. 65)

On the other hand, Tom also had a relationship with Myrtle. One day, Myrtle asked McKee and her sister, Catherine, to come to her party. In the party, Mrs. McKee said that her husband took some pictures of Mrs. McKee since they were married showing that he loved her very much. Then, Myrtle told to Mrs. McKee about her marriage with his husband that she was not happy with her husband, Wilson because his husband did not have much money. It can be seen in the quotation below :

"I married him because I thought he was a gentleman...The only crazy I was when I married him. I knew right away I made a mistake. He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in...." (p.27)

This quotation showed that the reason why Myrtle married with Wilson. She also told that she was not happy with him. George Wilson did not give Myrtle what she wanted so Myrtle tried to find another man who could realize what all the things she wanted. The man that could realize what Myrtle wanted was Tom. Then, Myrtle and Tom had a relationship behind each of their couple.

In the case above, it can be seen that all of them tried to find their happiness with their own couple. However, they did not find the happiness from their couple so they found the happiness from others. Daisy was not happy with Tom because she loved Gatsby and Myrtle was not happy with Wilson because he did not have much money.

B. Persistence

In this novel, there is persistence that had done by Gatsby as the main character. Gatsby was born as a poor man and wanted to be with Daisy that was born in a rich

family. Her family did not like Gatsby because he was a poor man. It made him sad so he had a will for getting much money by working. After five years, Gatsby had been a rich man that had a luxury house, much money, and the social connection. Every night, he made a big party that had a purpose to attract Daisy to come in the party and to meet him. In the party, Gatsby did not drink and dance because he just wanted Daisy to come to his party so he always watched every guests that came to his party. In the fact that Gatsby did not know his guests before. He just hoped that Daisy would come to his party.

C. Individualism

There is individualism phenomena that can be found in the society. It depends on each of personal performance. In the society, there is a belief that a live depends on individual's effort. A person can get his or her prosperity without any help from other people. It means that the person has to have a brave to make his or her dream coming true.

In the *The Great Gatsby* novel, individualism can be seen in the Tom Buchanan character. He was a rich man that did not like Gatsby. He distrusted Gatsby about Gatsby's past. He suspected Gatsby that he had a "Drug Store" that was collaborated with Meyer Wolfsheim in Chicago. It can be seen in the quotation below :

"Who are you, anyhow?" broke out Tom. "you're one of that bunch that hangs around with Meyer Wolfsfeim-that much I happen to know. I've made a little investigation into your affairand I'll carry it further tomorrow." "you can suit yourself about that, old sport," said Gatsby steadily". "I found out what your 'drug-stores' were." He turned to us and spoke rapidly. (p.102)

D. Self Reliance

There are some self reliances shown in *The Great Gatsby* novel. First, in the beginning of the story, Nick came into the East and learned about the business contract. Because of that, his father said to him like the quotation below:

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“Whenever you fell like critizing any one, “ he told me. “just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had” (p.3)

Then, Jay Gatsby also showed his self reliance when he wanted to work and to get much money. He did not rely on his parents so he wanted to get much money by himself. He never gave up to get his dream.

There is a history of Jay Gatsby that will be discussed in this paper. Jay Gatsby came from Midwest, like Nick Carraway (Daisy’s cousin). He was from North Dakota but his father was from Minessota. In the first appearance of Gatsby in the novel, he was a little bit mysterious and sociable dreamer. He was from a poor family whose father was a farmer. When he was a young man, he isolated himself from his family and the society.

Before being succesful person, Gatsby had a name James Gatz. He changed his name being Jay Gatsby at the age of seventeen when he started his career. The reason why he changed his name because the name of Gatsby had a good meaning. It can be seen in the quotation below :

"He was a son of God - a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that - and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end." (p.75)

The other reason why he changed his name was because he wanted to make his new life after being a rich man. His struggle to be a rich man was not easy. He had to climb to an isolated place and also living separated with society.

All of Gatsby’s money were not from his family’s inheritance. He became a rich man because he had an occupation. His occupation actually was not a good position. He smuggled the alcohol that made him being a rich man. Although Gatsby had a bad job, he used his opportunity to get his prosperity from a poor man to be a rich man.

One of his purposes to become a successful person was to get the girl to whom he loved very much. The girl was Daisy. Gatsby and Daisy could not be a couple because Gatsby was a poor man so Daisy's family rejected Gatsby. Then, Gatsby had a will to be a successful person to get his prosperity and to get Daisy.

The achievement of being a successful person that Gatsby got, had made him moving from the low social class person to be the high social class person. It took a long time to change his social class. He needed five years to make him being a successful person.

IV. Conclusion

To conclude, American Dream is a crucial thing that every people in America wants to get. An example of American Dream is being a successful person. Besides that, the purpose of someone who has American Dream is to get much money and to be a rich person. There are many opportunities for someone who wants to get prosperity through American Dream.

The main character of *The Great Gatsby* used his opportunity of being prosperity to make his life changed. The way that he got his dream was not easy. He worked for five years to make his dream coming true. His purpose of getting his dream was to get his lover, Daisy and to change his life. His occupation that made him being a rich man was not a good occupation. It can be called as a prohibited occupation at that time. But, his struggle for getting prosperity was motivating the readers not to give up to get something.

It can be seen that Gatsby had worked hard for changing his social class from the low to the high social class. His struggle can be emulated by the readers. Good thing can happen if someone struggle for it. Never give up is also a key of being a successful person.

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