

“The marvel of Fitzgerald’s work is not in the prose itself, which is marvelously poetic and a touch melodramatic, but in the description and what the prose hints at.” (Terrington "The Great Gatsby Review") Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* utilizes one very important device: symbolism. Though easily overlooked—especially when used in setting—the symbolism hints at a deeper element of the story and the characters themselves. The symbolism of the home is not often noticed, because the concept of a house as a setting has become so familiar to us that the home exists only as a stage. The stages in *The Great Gatsby* are much more than that. In fact, these places exist and are protected by historical societies in the name of F. Scott Fitzgerald. This paper explores this theme and how the many places Fitzgerald lived provided inspiration for the symbolic homes of Tom, Nick, and Gatsby.

F. Scott Fitzgerald lived in approximately seven houses from 1919 to 1921, spanning from Alabama to New York to Minnesota. Each house possessed something particularly unique which left an impression on him. He lived in one house in Montgomery where he met Zelda, and stayed in a hotel in Minnesota that ran a speakeasy in the basement. (Richard P. McDermott "Saint Paul Sites of F. Scott Fitzgerald") 1922 began their frivolous careers as partying artists. They had unlimited access to alcohol while living in a club; in one rave the icons were thrown out and forced to stay in the hotel access the street. Each time he left one place, he took with him added culture and experience. He had seen places and people all across the country. He had lived in friends’ homes, cheap apartments, and shady clubs; but *one* house provided the inspiration for perhaps his most famous story. Fitzgerald lived at 6 Gateway Drive for only a year-and-a-half, but it was not forgettable. (Round "Radical Modern: F. Scott Fitzgerald and New York") The city seduced him with its wild enchantment and youthful promises, and he captured it all in pen.

The places he saw there became dwellings for his characters, and Tom, Gatsby, and Nick were born.

The most evident symbolism regarding setting is in Tom's house. Tom Buchanan belongs to the "old money" population of East Egg, where everything is more refined and private and respected. These qualities of East Egg are a sarcastic reminder of Tom's private life, which is nothing to be respected at all. East Egg is renowned for its wealthy traditionalism, so it is the ideal location for Tom, who uses his fake identity within the community to distract and deceive. Behind this façade and faux-reality, lies what goes on when the doors are closed. His elaborate house is parallel to his elaborate life: it is full of money, superficiality, and intimidation. ("The Great Gatsby" Enotes, 2011) Tom, caring about no one but himself, treats Daisy and talks about her as if she is just another object in his house of lies. In this way, he can subconsciously avoid feeling guilty about his actions. Just like his values, his house embodies emptiness. The windows are open, and everything looks like it is floating. ("The Great Gatsby" Enotes, 2011) This lack of substance is seen in Tom's actions—his toxic relationship with Daisy, his corrupt affair with Myrtle, and his hollow care for others. Tom's house is an empty, blocky symbol of his own narcissism.

Gatsby and his home delve into broader themes of symbolism compared to Tom's abode. When Fitzgerald resided in Long Island, he lived Gatsby's life. He held parties, went out on the town, and enjoyed his life of leisure. It was only when Fitzgerald left Long Island that the idea for Gatsby formed from his longing to go back. He used Gatsby as a moniker for himself and used his house as a single setting to represent the grandness of the twenties era. ("The symbol of Gatsby's Mansion in The Great Gatsby from LitCharts | The creators of SparkNotes") Gatsby's house is colossal and filled with celebrated people, which were what the twenties were all about.

There was alcohol and music and performers. Whereas Tom's house was filled with money, Gatsby's house was *achieved* and is *kept* with his money. The way in which Jay Gatz becomes the legendary and wealthy figure of Gatsby reflects the twenties in that anyone can attain power and legacy in America. (Terrington "The Great Gatsby Review") Fitzgerald, like Gatsby, had to work through the rings of social classes to achieve his fame, but he never forgot what was important to him; and neither did Gatsby, who kept a picture of Dan Cody in his home. The things which are displayed in a home show who the owner is and what is important to him. ("Psychology of Space" 2015) In this way, Gatsby's house becomes more than a setting for the twenties, but more of a beacon or temptation for Daisy. She is the sole instigator of Gatsby's actions. He has given up his old life and all its pleasures for Daisy. His home stands across the bay as a reminder to her of his care.

The least obvious use of symbolic setting is in Nick's house. Nick Carraway's house is often over-looked, and symbolism follows unnoticed. The blatant uniqueness of his bungalow among the glorious mansions of West Egg is a representation of Nick's shy eccentricities amidst the gaudy residents of West Egg. His house is different, one-of-a-kind like himself. Nick's one flaw is honesty. (Terrington "The Great Gatsby Review") While many see it as a virtue, Nick feels as though it is a curse he has brought with him to West Egg, and it shows in his house. Fitzgerald portrays Nick's bungalow as the most honest house on the island, which is suitable for its owner, who is the most honest resident among the slew of deceitful, shadowy characters in the book. His life among these people contributed to his role as a reliable narrator. Nick's character starts fresh in West Egg, and his actions are out of his own volition; whereas Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby have lives built on secrets and years in New York under their belts. The problems which Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby involve Nick in make him the only character with access to both sides

of the story. From the start, Fitzgerald describes Nick's house as "squeezed between two huge places." (Fitzgerald 1925) The placement of Nick's house foreshadows his entanglement in the dramatic plots of his neighbors. In this way, Fitzgerald tells the reader of Nick's role within *The Great Gatsby* long before any of the turmoil occurs.

F. Scott Fitzgerald is a master of symbolism. All the places he laid his head provided impetus for his use of symbolism is setting. Behind Tom's shallowness and narcissism sits a blocky, empty house. Through the sea of celebrated icons of the twenties is a man whose true concern is the girl who lives just across the bay; and underneath the clutter of oddities and trinkets is a narrator as honest as his home.